The background of the cover is a blue-toned photograph. In the upper center, a classical Greek temple with several columns is visible, partially obscured by trees. In the foreground, a large, dark, cylindrical object, possibly a cannon barrel, points diagonally upwards from the bottom left. Behind it, several soldiers wearing helmets are visible, looking towards the camera. The overall scene suggests a historical military context.

# **HERAKLES & THE SWASTIKA**

## **Greek Volunteers in the German Army, Police & SS 1943-1945**

**by Antonio J. Munoz**



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DISCLAIMER: Although the author felt that the brunt of the fighting in Greece was performed by the ELAS partisan movement, in no way is this meant to detract from the other, various Greek patriotic guerrilla organizations. However, during the research for this work, it has been established that many of those other guerrilla forces either (1) had an understanding of non-aggression with one or more Axis countries, or (2) eventually joined the German, Bulgarian, or Greek collaborationist government forces. The reasons why they did varied, but basically it was on account of the bitter fighting between the various Greek guerrilla movements.

COVER PHOTO: A German Assault Gun Moving Below the Parthenon, 1944 US National Archives. ABOVE: An Evzone of the Rallis government, 1944. Bundesarchiv.



## -ACKNOWLEDGMENTS-

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ABOVE: Two bodyguards of Aris Velouchiotis, one of the leading founders of ELAS, the military arm of EAM. After the war, he was hunted down by government troops of the post-war George Papandreou government and killed. His severed head was later displayed for all to see. In an ironic twist of fate, it had been former Greek Axis security forces, employed by the new Greek government, which hunted down and killed him. Museum of Modern History, Ljubljana, Slovenia.



# HERCULES & THE SWASTIKA: Greek Volunteers in the German Army, Police, and SS 1943-1945

by Antonio J. Munoz

## INTRODUCTION-

When Greece surrendered to the Axis powers in 1941 it had been due to force of German arms. The Italians, who had started a war with Greece in 1940, were mired in Albania, from where they had launched their invasion. In fact, the small Greek army had actually captured Albanian territory, and had placed the Italians on the defensive. After the peace was declared, the Italians were placed in charge of most of Greece. The Germans, who had been crucial in defeating Greece, were given eastern and central Macedonia, with its important port of Salonika<sup>17</sup>.

The Bulgarians were given Thrace (northeastern Greece). It was the much hated Italians, however, who received the bulk of Greek territory. The overwhelming majority of the Greek populace detested the Italians for two main reasons. First and foremost, it had been the Italians who started the war. Secondly, and almost as important, the Greeks had been able to defeat the Italian army, and only with German intervention, were the Italians able to defeat Greece. The people of Greece felt that it was a great humiliation to be governed by an "unworthy" enemy.

Initially, Italian sensitivities and interests were given primary importance in Greece by Hitler, who wished to keep Italy's Fascist leader, Benito Mussolini happy. Yet the Greek population's refusal to comply with Italian wishes and demands, due to the Greek disgust at having to be dominated by the Italians, coupled with poor Italian administration of the Greek countryside, caused a tremendous economic (and eventually, a politically volatile) situation almost from the very beginning of their administration of the country.

In fact, the shortage of food during the Greek famine winter of 1941-42 caused much dissatisfaction and anger in the Greek populace. This famine, coupled with other "shortcomings" on the part of the Italian occupation administration, aided directly the growth of the Greek guerrilla movement beginning in the spring of 1942.

The "*Andartes*," as the Greek guerrillas were called, were initially a series of un-coordinated partisan bands of varying size. They were disjointed and erratic in their attacks , plans and purpose. This was normal, as most partisan movements begin a guerrilla war as seemingly

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<sup>17</sup> The Greek island of Crete was also given to the Germans.



separate and independently operated "ventures." It is only after some time has elapsed that potential leaders within the varying guerrilla cells, both political and/or military, come to the forefront of the struggle to wrest control over the movement.

In the case of Greece, as well as in Yugoslavia, several distinct politically backed guerrilla organizations emerged, whose leaders sought not only to evict the Axis occupation armies, but set their eyes on the reigns of their country's rule in a post-war Europe. These guerrilla movements were by themselves initially at least, too weak individually to assume absolute control of the entire partisan movement in their respective countries.

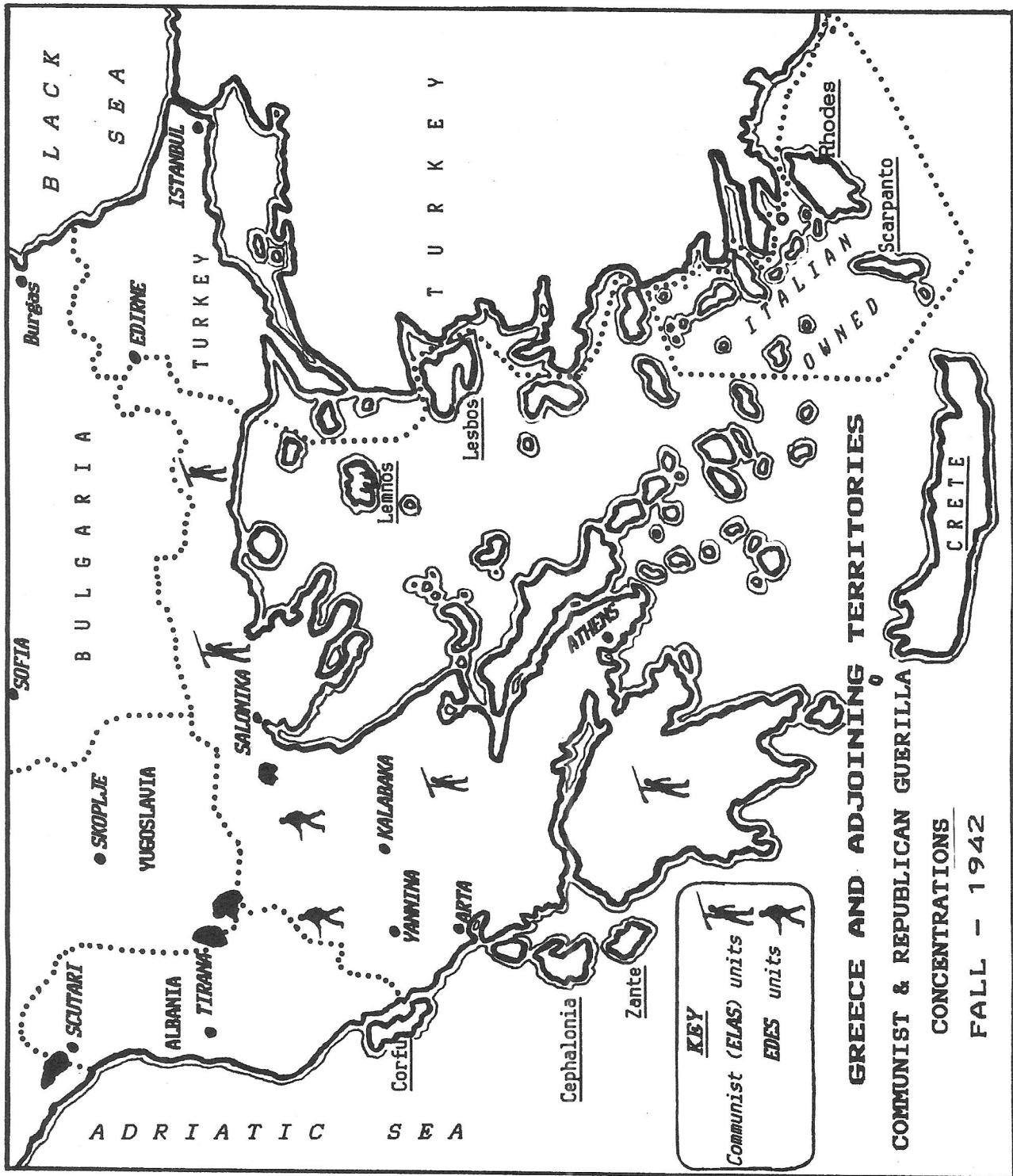
Instead, several guerrilla groups with diverse post-war political aims emerged and formed their own partisan bands. By far the largest political movement was EAM, which stood for *Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo*, or the "National Liberation Front," which loosely controlled all left-wing political parties, calling its partisans the *Ethnikos Laikos Apeleftherotikos Stratos* ("National Popular Liberation Army"), or ELAS. There were other left-leaning political parties such as EKKKA (*Ethniki ke Kinoniki Apeleftherotikis*), or National and Social Liberation; and PAO (*Panelliniki Apeleftherotiki Organosis*), or Panhellenic Liberation Organization, and of course, there was the KKE (*Kommounistiko Komma Elladas*), or Communist Party of Greece.

The Monarchists, Republicans, Nationalist, and yes, even Greeks who were Fascist all had their political/military movements. In the autumn of 1941, Napoleon Zervas formed the *Ethnikos Dimokratikos Ellinikos Syndesmos* (National Democratic Greek League), or EDES for short. Zervas set this organization up supposedly under the leadership of the absent republican General Plastiras, but throughout its history, it was the obesely overweight Colonel Zervas who would run it. The movement was republican (and therefore, anti-monarchist) in character. This also meant that EDES would eventually come into conflict with EAM-ELAS, and other Communist/Socialist or left-wing movements. Then there was the miniscule EEE (*Ethniki Enosis Ellas*), or National Union of Greece which was an anti-Semitic republican political movement which the Germans were able to resurrect in 1943 in Salonika, after having been banned in the 1930's.

There were other, smaller movements but the above list describes quite vividly the vast differences that existed within Greek society, and therefore within the *Andarte* (guerrilla) movement. The British, who had set up an entire war department (Special Operations Executive, or SOE) geared solely to support by whatever means necessary a guerrilla war behind the Nazi lines, tried their best to support all of the apparently anti-Axis Greek guerrilla movements, but they were never quite able to eliminate the internecine warfare that slowly but surely developed between these Greek political and military rival factions.

Political idealism eventually even soaked most of the British SOE operatives in Greece into a pro-western (pro-British) stance that led to the eventual full backing and support of monarchist and republican movements in that country against the Communists and socialists. In Yugoslavia, a country that in a post-war Europe was to be mostly in the sphere of the USSR's interests, the Communist movement there succeeded partly due to complete western (British & American) and Soviet aid. This had been accomplished also by the alienation of the Chetnik-Royalists who were initially backed by the British and Americans but through actual collaboration with the Axis, and





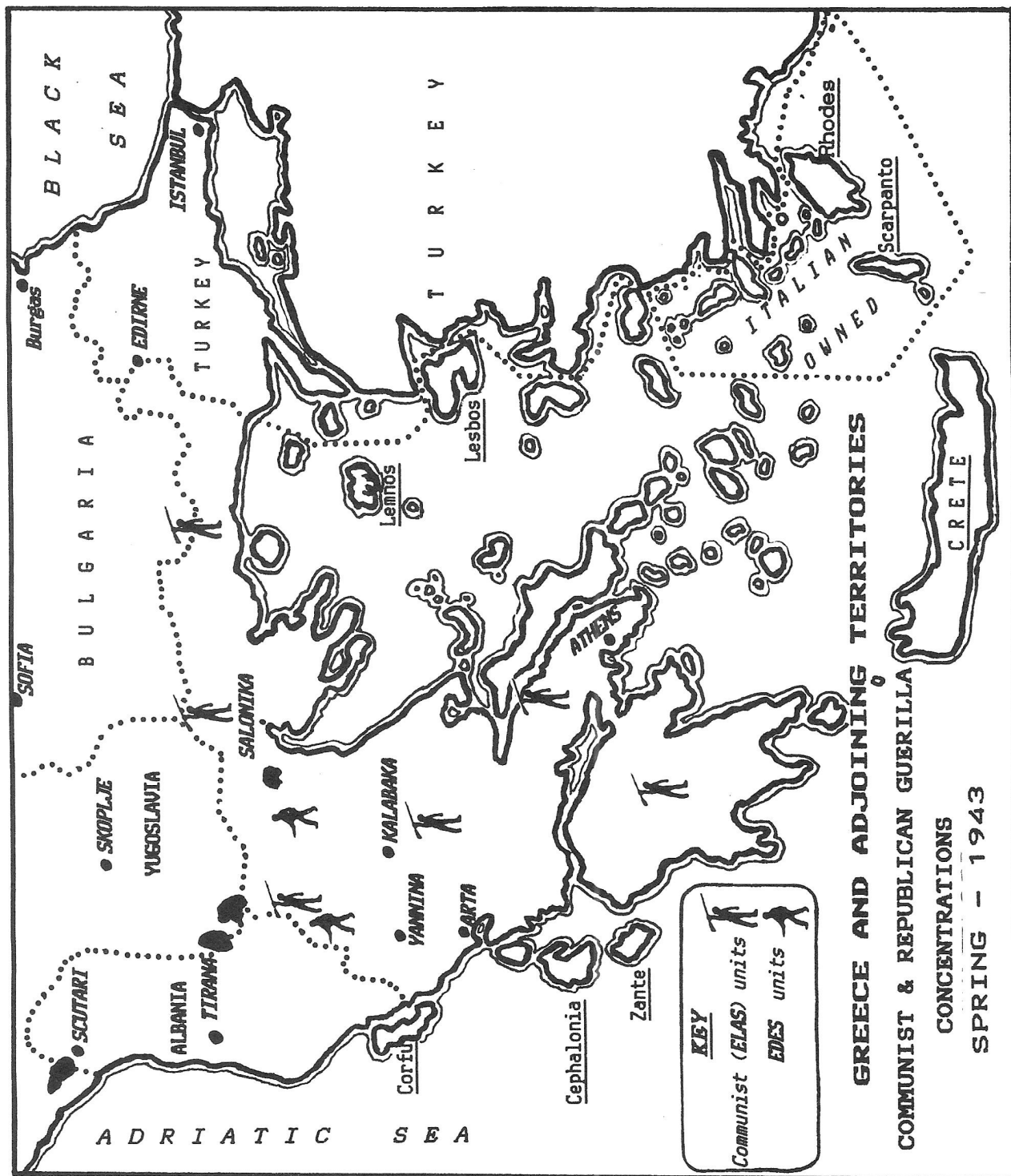


RIGHT: *Capetan* Markos Vafiadis, EAM representative to 1st ELAS Division in Thessaly. He was to be Commander in Chief of the Communist "Democratic Army" during the Greek Civil War between 1947-49.

BELOW: A unit of the ELAS guerrillas. Photos, courtesy of the Museum of Modern History, Ljubljana, Slovenia.









by falsified reports from pro-Tito British SOE operatives in Yugoslavia, the Chetniks had been cut off from Allied support by 1943. Lacking enough supplies, the movement eventually began to wane. In the case of Yugoslavia, left-leaning political idealism had soaked into the minds of many British SOE operatives- the complete reverse of what occurred in Greece.

In effect, the Allies were deciding the political make up of Europe even before the war had been won. Whether it was coincidence that in Greece, a country who was to be in the western "sphere of influence," SOE operatives backed anti-Communist groups, and in Yugoslavia, whose "sphere of influence" was to be Soviet, SOE operatives eventually backed the Communists is irrelevant in so far as the present day is concerned, but at the time, this tacit British support of one side or the other, whether we see it as real or imagined, also aided to increase the differences that existed in these various Greek political movements.

While the Axis were actively supporting those forces in Greece who wished to destroy all left wing parties (and their partisan movements), the main leftist group (EAM-ELAS) could not understand British support of Greek political/military guerrilla groups that opposed their vision of a utopian post-war Greek Communist society. In their eyes, Britain was almost as guilty (if not just as guilty) as the Nazis in supporting what they termed "reactionary" elements in Greece.

Of course, the monarchists and republicans saw the exact same thing happening when the Soviets began to supply EAM-ELAS. They perceived the leftists as the "reactionaries," and hence the irreconcilable differences between these diversely opposing political groups. That they would fight it out to see who would dominate the political life of Greece was a forgone conclusion.

To quote a famous Spanish government official (when speaking of the rift between the Spanish nationalists and leftists in the 30's), *"We just couldn't tolerate one another."* That quote sums up the prevailing attitude of the Greek psyche and temperament of that time as well. It goes a long way to explain why so many Greeks collaborated willingly, or unwillingly, partially or completely with the Axis occupiers. A recently published work has quoted a figure of 50,000+ men.<sup>20</sup> My research indicates that this number is a bit too high. My research has concluded that no more than around 34-36,000 men were involved.

<sup>20</sup>

J. Lee Ready. "World War Two, Nation by Nation." Arms & Armour Press: London. 1995. Page 123.

# Italy's Surrender And Its Consequences-

The collapse of Italy in September 1943 brought the Germans into the forefront in Greece (and elsewhere). Up until the beginning of 1943, the Germans had been content to control Salonika, Crete, and other lesser islands, and to allow the Italians to run the country as they saw fit. This all began to change in the spring of 1943 when Ioannis Rallis became Prime Minister of Greece, replacing General Tsolakoglu who had become "untrustworthy" in the eyes of the Axis.

With Rallis' permission, and no approval from the Italians, German troops were moved into the Peloponnes. It wasn't so much the growing guerrilla movement that alarmed the Germans as was the success of the Allies in defeating Rommel's Afrika Korps and expelling the Germans and Italians from the African continent altogether. Now Greece went from being a backwater forward supply base to the next possible invasion area for the Allies.

Not that the guerrilla movement was not sending alarm signals of the greatest magnitude to German command circles, quite the contrary. An incident which occurred in the Peloponnesian peninsula in the fall of 1943 clearly shows the danger and increase in partisan activity in Greece, as this following quote describes, which occurred near the Peloponnes village of Kalavryta:

*"Toward the end of 1943 Greek guerrillas, striking from mountain hide-outs, captured eighty German soldiers. They took the captives into the mountains and pushed them over a precipice. Only three of the eighty survived. Nazi retribution was swift and terrible. It was mistakenly directed against the townspeople rather than against the guerrillas."<sup>19</sup>*

The Germans, who had for the most part, watched anxiously as the ever worsening Axis military situation increased in direct proportion and relation to the growth of the Greek partisan movement, now were faced with the prospects of governing more Greek territories with one less ally (the Italians). Having been on the sidelines since 1941, they were now thrust into the spotlight in Greece by becoming the defacto primary occupying power.

They inherited from the Italians an economic "basket case," and a country on the verge of political and military anarchy. The power vacuum which had been left by the Greek collapse in April, 1941, coupled by the famine winter of 1941-42, and two years of Italian mis-management had created the conditions which existed in 1943 when the Germans had to take control. The economic stability of the Greek nation had not much improved since that starvation crisis of 1941-42.

Additionally, the Greek populace had to suffer arbitrary Italian policies as much as they had to deal with making a day to day living. Resentment of the "unworthy" Italians had simmered just beneath the surface, and the Greek guerrilla movements, supported initially by British, and then

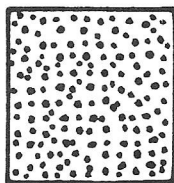
<sup>19</sup> Robert H. Jackson. "Tyranny On Trial. The Evidence at Nuremberg." Southern Methodist University Press: Dallas. 1954. Page 199.



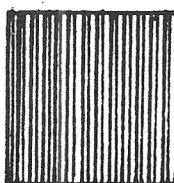
# How Greece Was Partitioned by the Axis



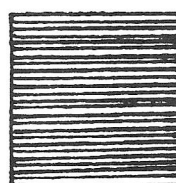
German  
occupation  
zone

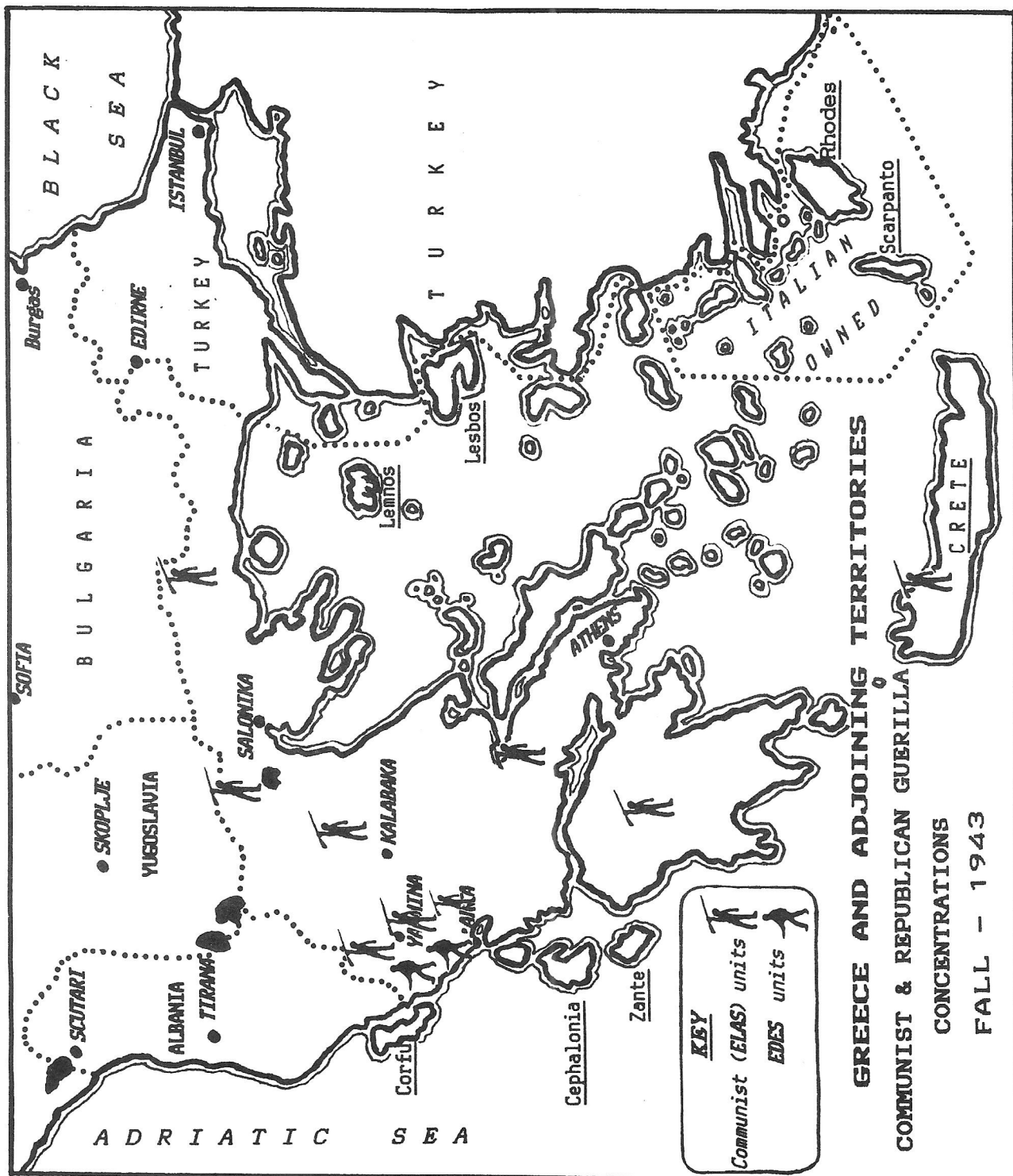


Italian  
occupation  
zone

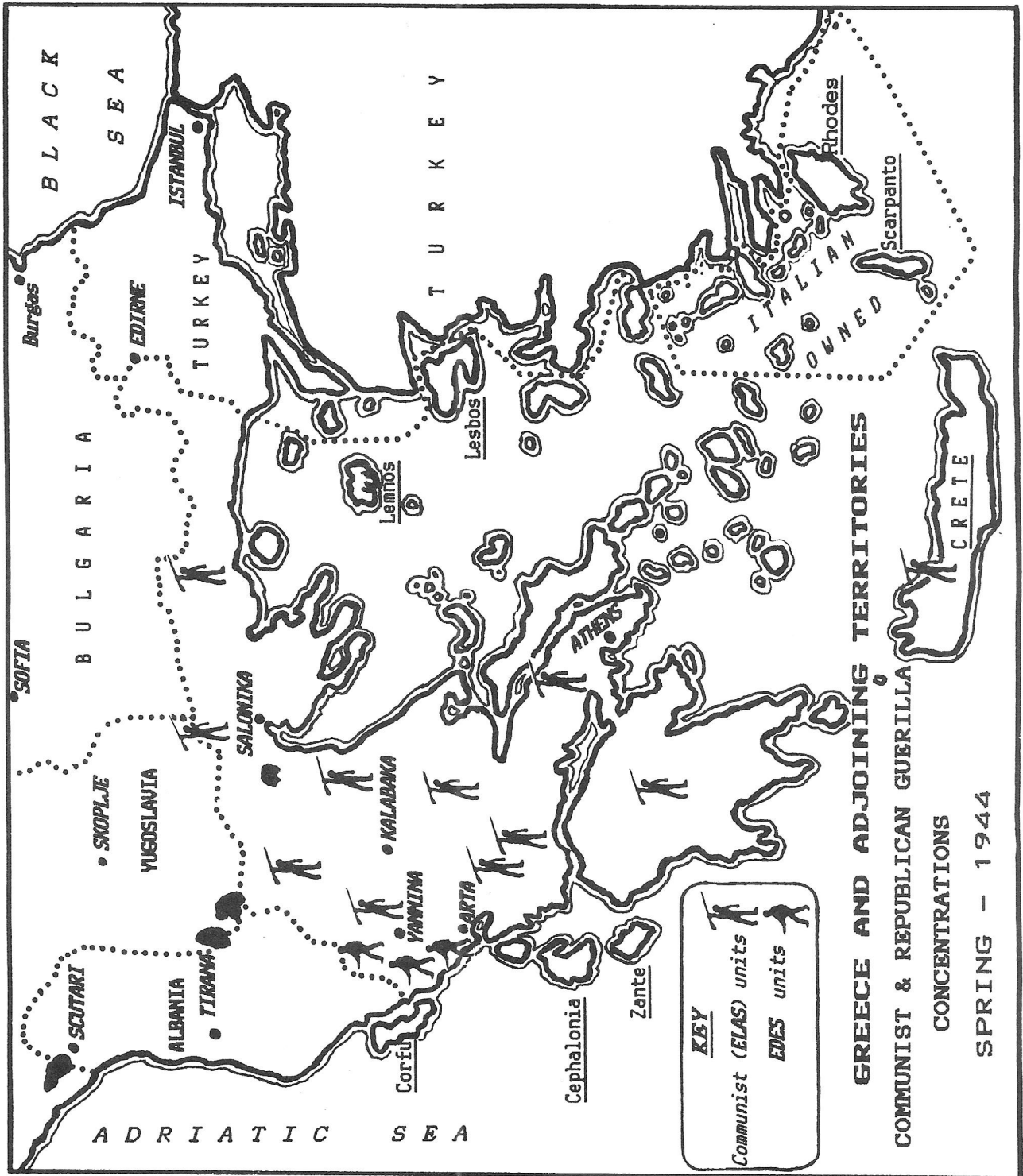


Bulgarian  
occupation  
zone









BELOW: A German anti-guerrilla sweep in Greece,  
sometime in July, 1944

NEXT PAGE TOP: A Greek interpreter, wearing  
the double "A A" arm band of an interpreter. The  
unit that he seems to be working for is the 4th SS  
Police Panzergrenadier Division.

NEXT PAGE BOTTOM: A rather rare picture  
indeed! Men of the 4th SS Division in tropical attire!  
Museum of Modern History, Ljubljana, Slovenia.







Soviet (ELAS only) aide, began to grow and become more emboldened and sophisticated. As diverse as the various political-military guerrilla movements were, they began to become effective.

This then, was the military and political dilemma which Germany had inherited from the Italians in Greece in the fall of 1943. By this time, Germany was fighting a war of attrition on several fronts. Greece was on a possible Allied "hit list" for late 1943-early 1944. The Germans could ill afford to spare troops for Greece, but they did their best to try and reinforce the small German garrison. These German reinforcements were not sufficient however, to properly occupy the vast new Greek territories, with hundreds of miles of coastline which they now had to protect from a possible Allied invasion, let alone control the areas deep inside the country.

The use of indigenous militia units had already become standard practice in other parts of Nazi occupied Europe, the Baltics, and Russia. Greece had up until then only supplied a small police and Gendarmerie (rural police) force which was considered unreliable at best. But in the fall of 1943, with Germany needing more external support, Greece was not to become the exception to the above mentioned rule.

In fact, the Germans found a "fertile field" when attempting to recruit anti-Communist units into their army, police and SS forces. The Security Battalion units set up under the Rallis government, whether they formed part of the five (5) Evzone regiments formed or the regular security battalionists, proved to be quite effective against the ELAS guerrillas. The vastly differing political ideals of the various Greek guerrilla movements only made the German recruiting efforts easier. ELAS, whether they acknowledge it or not, also played a major role in **pushing** many Greeks into the arms of the Germans.

For example, when the EKKA guerrilla movement was attacked and mostly destroyed by ELAS units, losing its founder, Colonel Psaros, EKKA's survivors, still wearing British uniforms, and carrying British "sten" guns, made the short journey to Patras and enlisted in the security battalions of Ioannis Rallis.<sup>20</sup> They did so not because they were ardent Nazis, as much as they wanted to avenge the death of their leader and the destruction of their movement by ELAS.

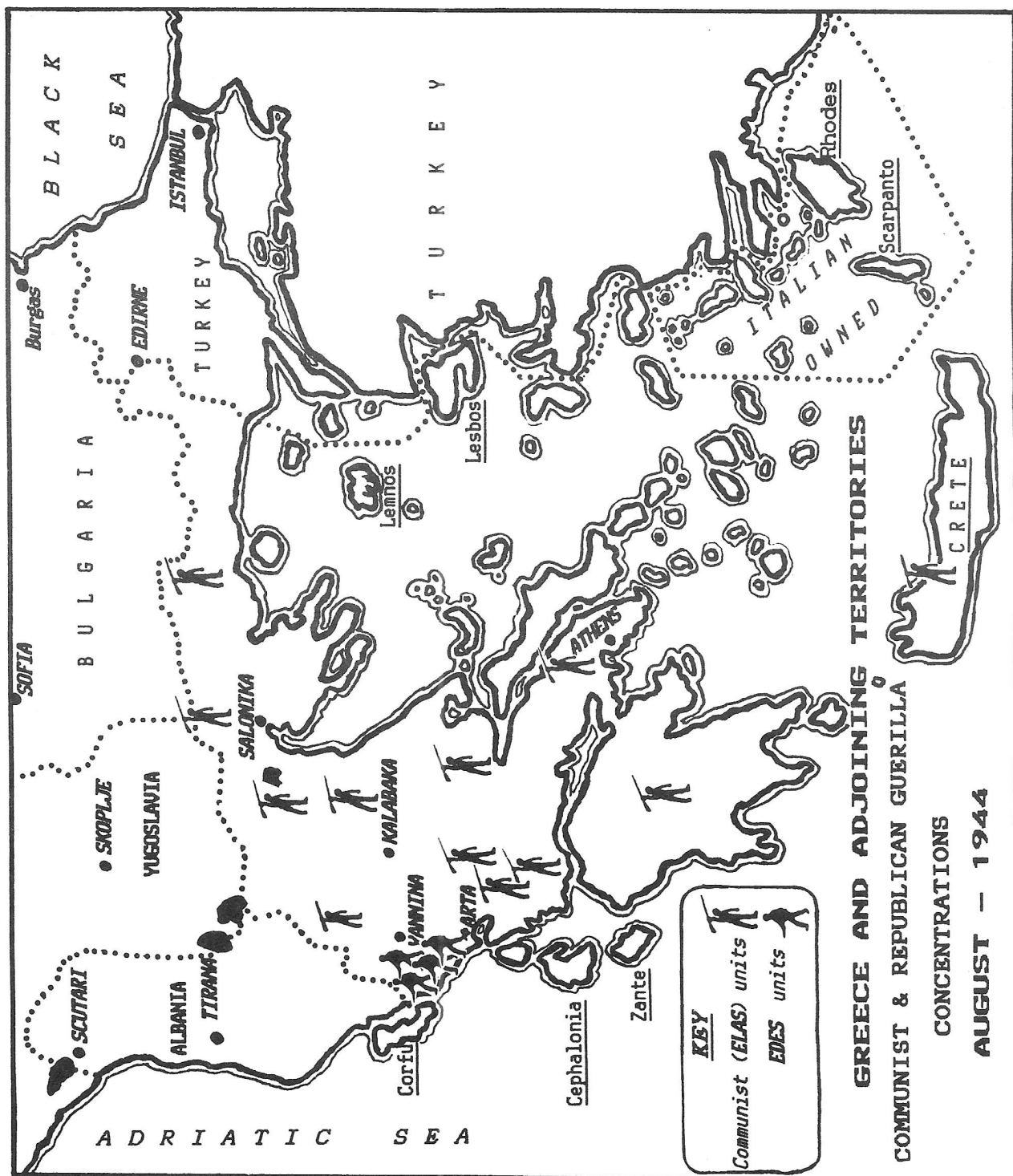
The British tried their best to contain this internecine warfare, but they could not eliminate it altogether. On the contrary, emotions boiled over as is the case with the quick-tempered Greek personality. The Germans, seeing what was happening, took full advantage of these political differences- expanding the chasm that already existed between the royalists, conservative republicans, socialist, and communists- just as they had already done in other parts of Axis occupied Europe and the USSR.

The German watch word in Greece during the last occupation years of 1943-44 was "divide and conquer." In this they excelled, and thus they set the stage for the creation of Greek collaborationist forces, a subject which up until now has received little if no attention. This subject is historically important, since it details the active participation of perhaps around 50,000 Greeks in the German volunteer movement. A number which has up until the present been denied.

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<sup>20</sup> Mark Mazower. "Inside Hitler's Greece. The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44." Yale University Press: London. Page 325.





# THE BIRTH OF THE GREEK SECURITY BATTALIONS—

On April 6th, 1943 the more pro-German Ioannis Rallis was appointed by the Germans to become Prime Minister of Greece, thus replacing Prime Minister Logothetopoulos. With this new appointment, a new phase in German-Greek relations began. Rallis immediately reshuffled his Cabinet and, at the instigation of the SS, began planning the formation of his own security force, soon to emerge as the Security Battalions.<sup>23</sup> The Germans had seen the slow but steady rise in Greek guerrilla activity all across the country, so it was essential that they now tried to take all necessary steps to eliminate, or at least control this growing partisan menace.

With Rallis's permission, the Germans entered the Peloponnese in 1943. This had been done without even consulting the Italians, who had sizable forces there. Up until 1943 the Germans had been content to govern Crete, some smaller islands, and most of Macedonia with its important port of Salonika. But the worsening military situation in North Africa and the growing guerrilla menace in Greece forced them to begin taking measures which would ensure the security of their control in that country. A new Greek security force would be formed that would help assist them in this effort. Initially, one battalion of a thousand anti-terrorist police was organized, as well as recruiting thousands of villagers and townspeople into local self-defense militias to help fight off guerrilla "food raids".<sup>24</sup>

The first unit formed was organized on April 7th, 1943 in Athens by the Rallis government. Ioannis Rallis initially ordered the creation of four (4) security battalions. The initial battalion was formed easy enough, but volunteers for the next three proved hard to acquire, given that before the Italian surrender of September, 1943 (which deprived Germany of a much needed ally) the Germans were still unsure about arming an all-Greek security force, and the fact that few Greeks were willing to initially volunteer for service.

Only after the Italian surrender in September, 1943 did the Germans begin to accelerate the growth of the security battalions, partly due to the initial success of the first security units, and partly out of necessity in acquiring men to replace the Italian garrison units. By the end of 1943 the first three to four Evzone battalions had been formed and were actively hunting out the ELAS guerrillas. The Evzones were historically elite Greek mountain infantry units, analogous to Scottish Highlanders. They were distinguished by their picturesque white jackets, wide skirts and Albanian-type slippers with turned-up tufted toes. Their typical battle cry was "*Aera! Aera!*".<sup>25</sup>

By December, 1943 the first four Evzone battalions had been organized. The table of organization for the Evzone mountain battalion called for three rifle companies and a separate machine-gun company. Total effectives in each battalion was to be 22 officers and 539 NCO's and men. Initially, two battalions were stationed in Athens, and 2 in Salonika.

<sup>23</sup> Mark Mazower. "Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44". Yale University Press: London. 1993, page 120.

<sup>24</sup> J. Lee Ready. "World War II, Nation by Nation". Arms & Armour Press: London, 1995. Page 122.

<sup>25</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, Volume 8. William Benton, Publisher: Chicago. 1963. Page 930.

By the end of 1943, the Evzone battalions were actively participating in searching out and destroying the Greek ELAS Communist guerrillas. The Greek Gendarmerie force was still thought of as a vital part of the anti-guerrilla forces. A German roster for December 15th, 1943 showed that the Greek Gendarmerie force, which was supposed to have a complement of 14,923 men was wholly undermanned, having a deficiency of 4,040 officers, NCO's, and men.<sup>26</sup>

In fact, the dated document detailed the numbers of officers and men as to "paper" strength and "actual" numbers as follows:

-Gendarmerie Force as of 15.12.43-

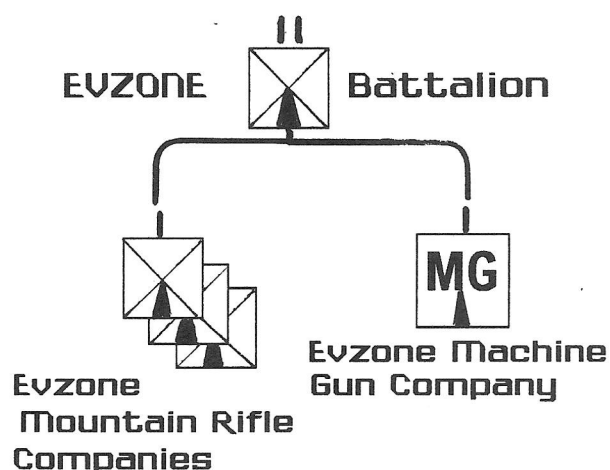
<u>Authorized Strength</u>	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Actual Strength</u>
1,169		1,223
13,754	<u>NCO's and men</u>	9,660*
14,923	<u>Total</u>	10,883

\*[ 2,460 NCO's and 7,200 men ]<sup>27</sup>

The recruitment of men into the Evzone battalions also had an affect on the loss of personnel in the Gendarmerie force, as testified by the following account:

*"In January 1944 Rallis stepped up the pressure on army officers, threatening to penalise any serving officer who refused to 'volunteer' by stopping his pay and food cards. On 22 May the government published a three-page list of such men and announced that they had been placed on the retired list and had forfeited all pension rights. For the first time, regular army NCOs were posted to battalion units. Men were deliberately dismissed from the gendarmerie without rations to force them into the Battalions. Under duress, large numbers of gendarmes and army officers complied;*

### Schematic Diagram of a typical Evzone Battalion, 1943-44



<sup>26</sup>

NARS Microfilm T-78, Roll 450, Frames6426601.

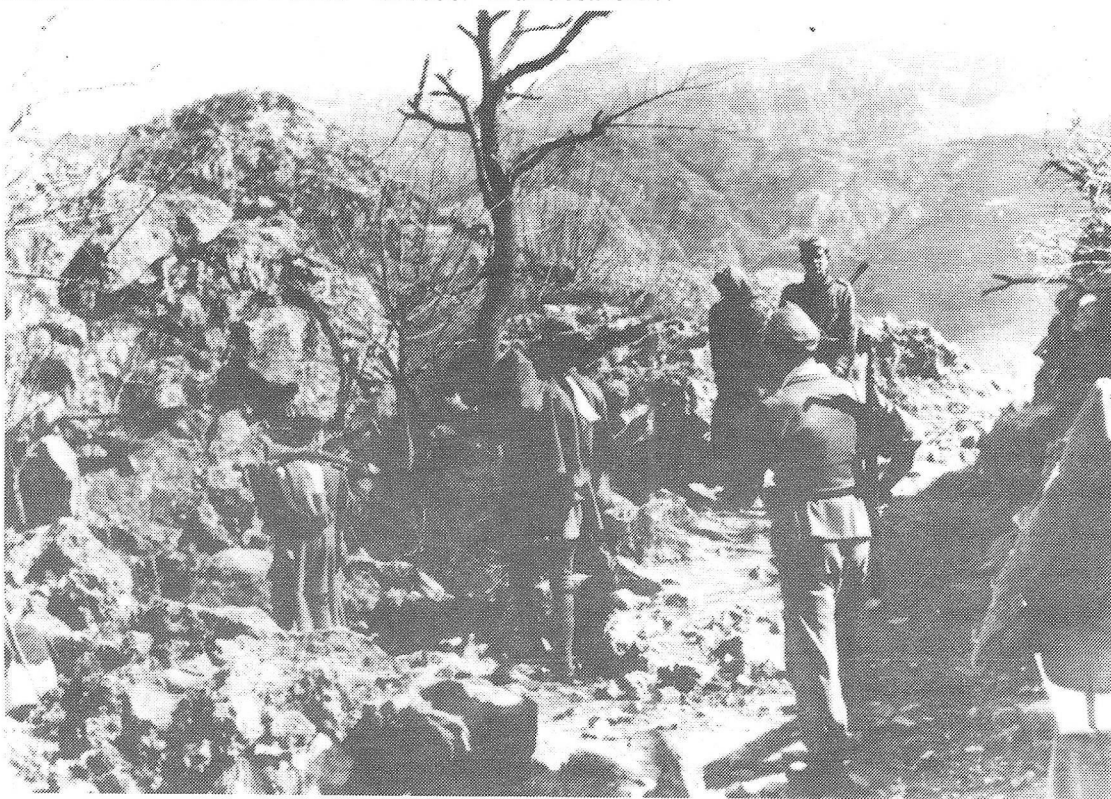
<sup>27</sup>

ibid, NARS T-78, Roll 450, frame 6426601.

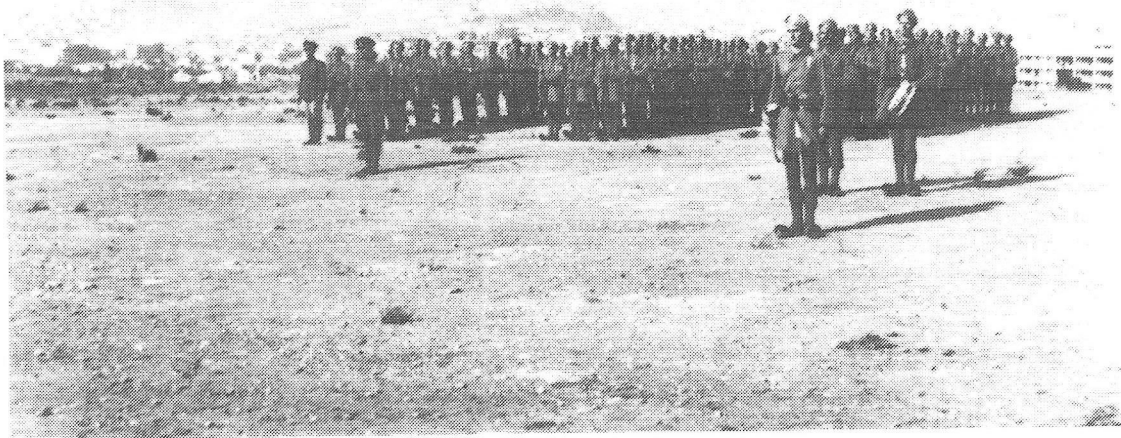


ABOVE: Greek security battalionists during an anti-guerrilla sweep, sometime in 1944.

BELOW: Close up view of German police, SS, and Greek government officers and officials, during an inspection of Evzone troops by SS General Walter Schimana. Schimana is seen here in the background, and to the left of the civilian official seen here kneeling. Behind Schimana, on his right hand side (2nd from left of the picture), is Colonel Hermann Franz, the Supreme Commander of the Order Police "Greece." Bundesarchiv.



BELOW: Evzones parade during a visit by SS General Walter Schimana, who assumed the title of Higher-SS & Police Leader "Greece," when SS General Juergen Stroop vacated that position.  
NEXT PAGE: As SS General Walter Schimana, and other German and Greek police and civilian officials look on, Evzones perform live fire exercises, and maneuvers. Bundesarchiv.







*others escaped to the Middle East, or took to the hills."*<sup>28</sup>

While the security battalions were in the process of being expanded, the Germans made use of those Italians who still supported a Fascist-Nazi victory by organizing them with some additional Greek volunteers into what were to be three mixed Greek & Italian police battalions. The units were raised and (initially at least), operated in the following localities:

Field Post No. 44 566 - Ist Police Volunteer Battalion, stationed in Athens  
Field Post No. 47 316 - IIInd Police Volunteer Battalion, stationed in Volos  
Field Post No. 45 542 - IIIrd Police Volunteer Battalion, stationed in Verria<sup>29</sup>

Although the above three police volunteer battalions were to have been composed of both Italians and Greeks, a captured German document, dated "April 12, 1944" clearly shows that only Germans and Italians comprised the Ist Police Volunteer Battalion in Athens, Greece. The German commander is listed as being Major Mahner, and the numbers of volunteers were as follows:

	Officers	Civilian Officials	NCO's	Men
Germans	8	3	69	9
Italians	10	0	77	498
TOTAL	18	3	146	507
GRAND TOTAL : 674 Officers, NCO's, and men (585 of which were Italian) <sup>30</sup>				

Nowhere in this German document does it show that any Greeks were attached to this volunteer battalion. Whether this was also true in the other two volunteer police battalions is as yet unknown. By the time of the German withdrawal from Greece, the above-named Ist and IIIrd Battalions were merged into a unit title "Police Regiment Nagel."<sup>31</sup> This unit was led by *Oberstleutnant der Schutzpolizei* (Lieutenant-Colonel of the Police) Nagel, who was Commander of the Order Police "Athens." Nagel's staff was small- just two officers, one civilian inspector, and three NCO's, but he had at his disposal an entire Gendarmerie platoon: Gendarmerie Zug [motorisiert] No.40, under the command of *Leutnant der Schutzpolizei* Westphal. This motorized platoon contained one officer (Westphal), five NCO's, and 34 men.<sup>32</sup>

With the aid of the German *Befehlshaber der Ordnungspolizei* (Commander of the Order Police) in Greece, Ioannis Rallis was able to eventually increase the number of Evzone units from an initial batch of four battalions, into three Evzone regiments of three battalions apiece. A German roster for these Evzone battalions lists them almost exclusively in southern and central Greece as of August 15, 1944:

Evzone Regiment No.1                  Athens                  LXVIII Army Corps area  
Ist Battalion

<sup>28</sup> Mark Mazower, op cit. Page 325.

<sup>29</sup> H.-J. Neufeldt, J. Huck, Georg Tessin. "Zur Geschichte der Ordnungspolizei 1936-1945." Als Manuskript gedruckt, Bundesarchiv: Koblenz, 1957. Part II, page 72.

<sup>30</sup> NARS Microfilm T-501, Roll 259, frames 000535-42.

<sup>31</sup> The IIInd Volunteer Police Battalion had been destroyed by then.

<sup>32</sup> NARS T-501, Roll 259, frames 000535-42.

IInd Battalion		
IIIrd Battalion		
Evzone Regiment No.2	Tripolis	LXVIII Army Corps area
Ist Battalion		
IInd Battalion		
IIIrd Battalion		
Evzone Regiment No.3	Yannina	XXII Mountain Corps area
Ist Battalion		
IInd Battalion		
IIIrd Battalion		

Apparently, the very first Evzone units to enter the Peloponnes had arrived in the beginning of 1944, as witnessed by this account:

*"On 20 January [1944] a detachment arrived in Patras [Peloponnes], where it paraded through the streets, apparently to some popular acclaim, before being billeted in the town's schools. To drum up local volunteers, officers told their men to visit the tavernas and impress the public with their pay, rations and good living conditions."<sup>34</sup>*

In addition to these three Evzone regiments, the Greek government also formed nine security battalions in Macedonia:

Volunteer Battalion I - In Verria, then Katerini in September, 1944.  
 Volunteer Battalion II - In Verria.  
 Volunteer Battalion III - In Cervia & Kozani, then only Kozani in September, 1944.  
 Volunteer Battalion IV - In Yiannitsa.  
 Volunteer Battalion V - In Bordia & Kozani, then Ptolomais in September, 1944.  
 Volunteer Battalion VI - In Bordia & Kozani.  
 Volunteer Battalion VII - In Sachos & Langada, then Kilkis in September, 1944.  
 Volunteer Battalion VIII - In Sachos & Langada.  
 Volunteer Battalion IX - In Krija-Wrissi (this unit was formed in September 1944).<sup>35</sup>

The Bulgarians also formed three additional Greek volunteer battalions in Macedonia. By August 15th, 1944 they had formed the Ist & IIIrd Battalions. For some reason, the IInd Battalion was still in the process of being organized and trained. The Ist Battalion was stationed in Kastoria, while the IIIrd Battalion was located in Edessa. The IInd Battalion was being organized in Florina.<sup>36</sup> These three battalions were more commonly referred to by the names of the towns where they were stationed. These three volunteer battalions contained a large number of members

<sup>33</sup> NARS Microfilm T-78, Roll 410, frames 6378310-72. Befehlsgliederung OB Suedost (Heeresgruppe F), Stand: 15.08.1944

<sup>34</sup> Mark Mazower, op cit. Page 325.

<sup>35</sup> H.-J. Neufeldt, et al, op cit. Page 73.

<sup>36</sup> H.-J. Neufeldt, et al, ibid. Page 73.



ABOVE: Purportedly a photograph of Andronios Fosteridis, the leader of the Tsaous Andon militia. "Tsaous Andon" was the *nom-de-guerre* of Fosteridis. U.S. National Archives.

of the old Inner Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, which sought Macedonian independence.

In addition to these three Bulgarian-raised volunteer battalions, plus the nine security battalions formed by the Greek government with German Order Police assistance, the Bulgarians maintained friendly relations with the Tsaous Andon militia group, headed by Andronios Fosteridis. Although this band had a British liaison officer (a Major Miller), it nevertheless had a non-aggression treaty with the Bulgarian forces in 1944. Its 5,000 men controlled an area north of the Drama district where they operated.

They were staunchly anti-Communist. This fact is shown by an incident that occurred on January 1st, 1944, when an ELAS force, at Major Miller's instigation, was invited to celebrate the New Year

with units of the Tsaous Andon militia. No one knows if the incident was premeditated or not, but what is known is that the ELAS group was murderously attacked with guns and axes and cut to pieces. Afterwards, the Tsaous Andon militia assisted the Bulgarian military in sweeps and anti-guerrilla drives against the 6th ELAS Division.



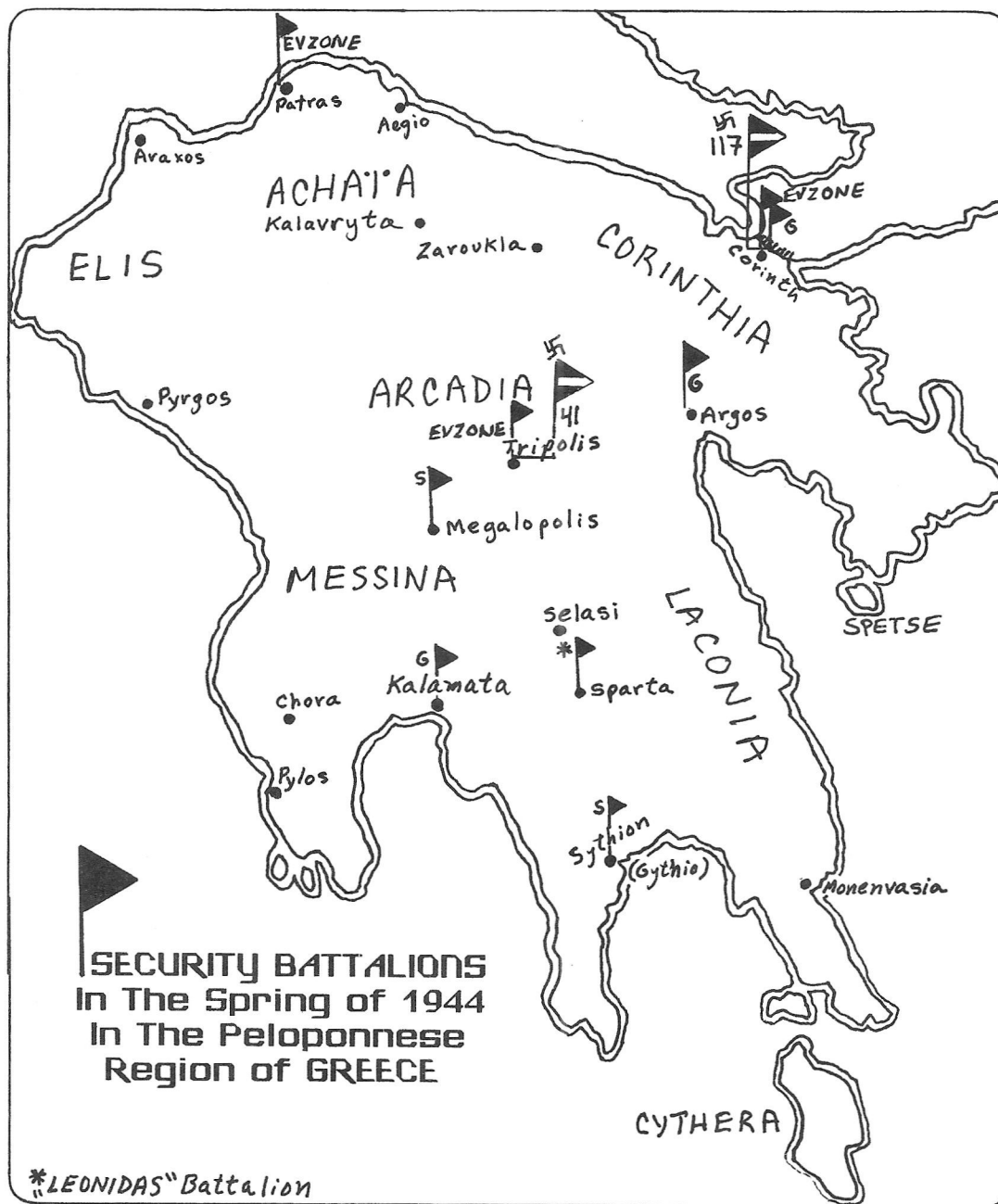
There were a total 250 Bulgarians in the Tsaous Andon militia. One of his lieutenants was Commander Theodoros Mikropoulos, who led the 2nd "Double" Company/ 26th Nationalist Regiment, stationed in the town of Bairam Tepe. In addition to these 5,000 militiamen, the Bulgarians had organized a small detachment of 300 Moslem Bulgarian volunteers who were sent to operate in western Macedonia in the Kastoria-Florina district. They were called *Comitadjis*.



ABOVE: Greek militiamen in eastern Macedonia. This particular group belonged to the Tsaous Andon militia group. They operated against the ELAS guerrillas, and in numerous instances, assisted the Bulgarian occupation forces in launching anti-guerrilla sweeps. The man seated, in the center of the photograph is purportedly none other than Andronios Fosteridis, the leader of this 5,000-man militia group. U.S. National Archives.

In March, 1944 two volunteer battalions were formed on the Island of Euboea (named "Wichos," and "Euboea"), while in July, 1944 Volunteer Battalion "Salonika" was formed. In August a volunteer "half" battalion was organized in Larissa under the auspices of the 4th SS Police Division, while in Karditsa, another volunteer battalion was formed with the aid of the German SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*). This battalion had a political movement backing it, whose initials were EASAD. In September 1944 the German Order police officially accepted into its ranks the "Poulos" Volunteer Battalion, even though it had been in existence since the fall of 1943.

Volunteer Battalion "Salonika" was another unit that, although officially recognized by the German Order Police in July, 1944 it had been in action against the *Andartes* (Greek guerrillas) since the previous summer. In fact, on July 6th, 1943 the unit was performing security duty in the road between Servia and Elason, about 36 kilometers southwest of Servia.<sup>37</sup>



In the Peloponnese, total Greek anti-partisan forces eventually amounted to some 8-9,000 men. Initially only one locally raised volunteer battalion had been formed. This was the "Leonidas" Volunteer Battalion based in Sparta. It had been equipped with German weapons and uniforms, and even included a German liaison officer. This unit had been formed in December, 1943 by a local, wealthy land owner by the name of Leonidas Vrettakos.

Vrettakos had lost his brother to the Com-

munist ELAS guerrillas, so he had a personal vendetta against the *Andartes*. Being a well to do farmer also meant that he had no desire to see a Communist victory. His unit became a serious and continuous threat to the local guerrillas. Its men were drawn from the villages and towns in the

<sup>37</sup> Kurt Mehner. "Die Geheimen Tagesberichte Der Deutschen Wehrmachtfuehrung Im Zweiten Weltkrieg 1939-1945." Biblio Verlag: Osnabrueck, 1988. Volume 7, page 98.

surrounding countryside and were intimately familiar with the region and its people. This made them very dangerous.

Additional forces in the Peloponnes included an Evzone battalion, sent to Patras in January, 1944. Eventually the entire 2nd Evzone Regiment (two additional Evzone battalions, not counting the one at Patras) arrived in the Peloponnes. One Evzone battalion was stationed at Tripolis, while the third was located at Corinth. To this force, five extra security and Gendarmerie battalions rounded up the entire Greek government military in the Peloponnes.

The ELAS guerrilla movement had been growing steadily, especially since the summer and fall of 1943. In fact, by July 28th, 1943 the number of combat personnel which ELAS could field was around 16,000 men and women.<sup>38</sup> This force continued to grow in the winter of 1943 and spring of 1944. While this had been going on, ELAS had been steadily eliminating any other potential guerrilla movement. This was in anticipation of the eventual Axis withdrawal from Greece, when the group with the strongest military backing would decide the political future of Greece.

It was for this reason that in April, 1944 ELAS attacked and destroyed EKKA, the last non-ELAS resistance movement in central Greece, killing its commander, Colonel Psarros. In anger and frustration, the remnants of EKKA, still wearing their short British battlejackets and ankle boots, and carrying sten guns, simply walked into Patras and volunteered for service in the security battalions!<sup>39</sup>

Fighting was bitter, all across the countryside. The emotions and politically opposite viewpoints all came to a clash. On December 30th, 1943, in the region of the LXVIII Army Corps near Athens, a unit of the volunteer battalions had a shoot out with the Communists. The battalionists captured 107 guerrillas.<sup>40</sup> A day later by Razzia, near Athens an additional 117 Communists were captured. This group included 17 ELAS officers.

The spring of 1944 brought no respite between the government and ELAS forces. On February 22nd, 1944 the 1st Evzone Regiment, operating south of Chalkis was surprised by a large ELAS unit. In the ensuing battle, numerous security men were killed and wounded. Thirty-five Evzones were reported missing and presumed captured.<sup>41</sup> Six days later, in the XXII Mountain Corps area by Agrinion an Evzone assault force surprised an ELAS unit and captured 40 Communists.<sup>42</sup> On March 8, 1944 a combined German police and Evzone force in the LXVIII Army Corps area captured 132 Communists and killed 21 around Piraeus.<sup>43</sup> That same day, in the Katerini district, a Greek security battalion was attacked and suffered 80 casualties before the *Andartes* could be driven off.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Janusz Piekalkiewicz. "Krieg auf dem Balkan 1940-1945." Suedwest Verlag GmbH & Co. KG: Muenchen, 1984. Page 221.

<sup>39</sup> Mark Mazower, op cit. Page 325.

<sup>40</sup> Kurt Mehner, op cit. Volume 9, page 153.

<sup>41</sup> Kurt Mehner, ibid. Volume 9, page 362.

<sup>42</sup> Kurt Mehner, ibid. Volume 9, page 382.

<sup>43</sup> Kurt Mehner, ibid. Volume 10, page 24.

<sup>44</sup> J. Lee Ready. "The Forgotten Axis. Germany's Partners and Foreign Volunteers in World War II." McFarland & Co., Inc.: Jefferson, 1987. Page 415.



BELOW & OPPOSITE PAGE: greek Gendarmerie officers and men of the Rallis government. When Ioannis Rallis assumed power in 1943, his initial drive to increase the number of Greek government forces met with resistance from the Germans. After Italy's surrender, the Germans were hard-pressed to replace the Italian occupation army and to deal with the growing guerrilla menace. They resolved this problem by helping to eventually increase the number of Greek collaborationist forces to some 34-36,000 men. U.S. National Archives.







ABOVE: While passerby's look morbidly on, two bodies lie in the park, hanging by their necks. Bundesarchiv.



LEFT: A Greek Gendarmerie. U.S. National Archives.



## The Fight Against the Greek Guerrillas-

In the Peloponnes, the ELAS guerrillas had their 3rd Division, with perhaps 4,500 men split into five guerrilla regiments. From the very beginning, the war there was just as bitter as in the rest of the Greek countryside. In early June, 1944 the Germans had decided to organize an anti-guerrilla operation that would be aimed at clearing out approximately two entire ELAS regiments from southern Sparta. Begun on June 10th, it employed the use of the IInd & IIIrd Battalions of the 18th SS Police Mountain Regiment, plus the SS Police Mountain Artillery Battalion.<sup>75</sup>

Additional forces included the "Leonidas" Battalion, the IIIrd Gendarmerie Battalion based in Kalamta, and one battalion (the IIIrd) of the 2nd Evzone Regiment based in Tripolis. Colonel Dertilis, who was initially in charge of the security battalions, had sent Colonel Papadongonas to the Peloponnes to run the security battalions there. By the time of this Axis anti-guerrilla drive in the Peloponnes, Colonel Dertilis had been replaced by Colonel Plytzanopoulos (in April or May, 1944).

Colonel Plytzanopoulos placed Colonel Papadongonas in charge of Greek forces during the operation. Greek Major Manidakis, who commanded the IIIrd Gendarmerie Battalion at Kalamata, would provide supporting infantry for the German SS police artillery battalion, once it moved south from its staging area in Megalopolis. A battlegroup of the 117th *Jaeger* Division, moving down from Korje, would also support the assault of the bulk of the 18th SS Police Mountain Regiment, and the IIIrd Battalion/ 2nd Evzone Regiment.

Colonel Dionysios Papadongonas was a very diligent and hard-working officer. He had personally placed a strong emphasis on raising volunteers for the security battalions in the Peloponnes. His units were put under the command of the Ministry of the Interior and regarded as part of the Gendarmerie. By the end of the occupation, the total number of Rallis troops in the Peloponnes would amount to some 8,000 men.<sup>76</sup>

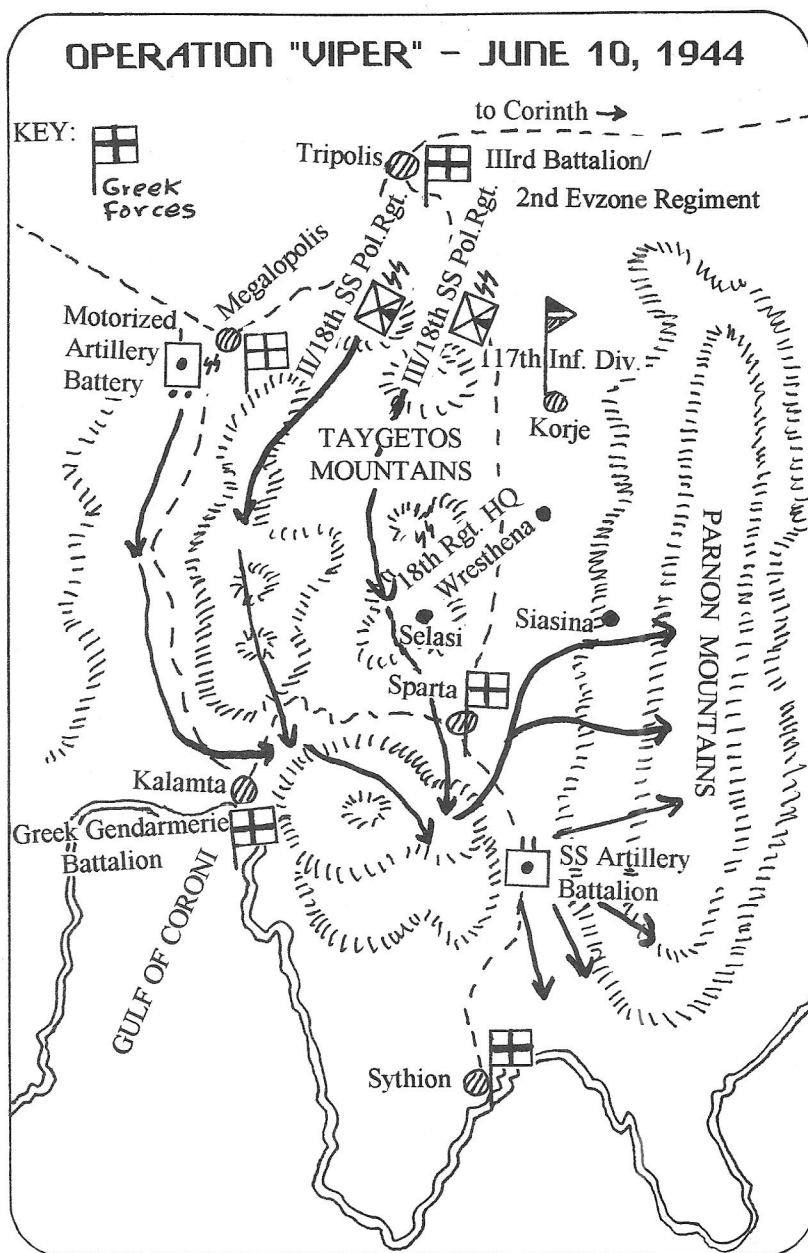
The German commander of this operation, code-named "*Natter*," ("Viper") was Major Poys, the commander of the IInd Battalion/ 18th SS Police Mountain Regiment. He met Colonel Papadongonas for a meeting as to how best to employ their forces. During this meeting the German major was quite impressed by the German speaking Greek colonel:

*"I found Colonel Papadongonas to be a loyal government career officer with nationalist-royalist leanings. He was stately and impressive, with Greek manners, and very soldierly, and in his roots he seemed kindly."*<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Minus the 3rd Police Mountain Artillery Battery, which was employed with the Ist Battalion / 18th SS Police Mountain Regiment in the Athens area.

<sup>76</sup> Mark Mazower, op cit. Page 327.

<sup>77</sup> Hermann Franz. "Gebirgsjaeger der Polizei: Polizei-Gebirgsjaeger-Regiment 18 und Polizei-Gebirgs-Artillerieabteilung, 1942 bis 1945." Verlags Hans-Henning Podzun: Bad Nauheim, 1963. Page 131.



The operation ended in the beginning of July, 1944 whereupon the various German units were redeployed elsewhere. On July 5th the SS Police Artillery Battalion withdrew to Sparta, where it then moved on to Tripolis. On the 6th it crossed the Corinth and on to Athens.<sup>78</sup> The IInd Battalion/ 18th SS Police Mountain Regiment was sent to Lamia, while the IIIrd Battalion went on to Amfissa.

Colonel Papadongonas continued to feature prominently in events in the Peloponnes. When the last Wehrmacht troops left that area in September, 1944 the Greek security battalions there did not withdraw with them. They were set upon by ELAS, and it was through Colonel Papadongonas's efforts that they continued to resist bitterly. This resistance was not always strong. For example, when the German 117th Division abandoned Agrinio and Amfilochia (south-central Greece) between September 8-12, the 1,000 or so Battalionists at Agrinio simply surrendered.

Between September 5th-20th the security battalionists holding Pyrgos, in Ellis held their own before being overwhelmed by elements of the 3rd ELAS Division. On

September 19th, at Navpaktos, on the northwest coast of the Gulf of Corinth, 650 battalionists surrendered to elements of the 13th ELAS Division. Major Kapetsonis, who led this battalion (and was a former member of EKKa) crossed over the gulf to Patras, in the Peloponnes, where he joined the Greek security garrison there.<sup>79</sup>

Another noteworthy operation, begun on July 18th, 1944 about 30 kilometers north of Athens, employed the Ist Battalion/ 18th SS Police Mountain Regiment (under the command of 1st Company commander, *Hauptmann* Bothner), supported by an Evzone battalion from the 1st Evzone Regiment. This battlegroup roamed this region north of Athens, hoping to make contact with and destroy elements of the 2nd ELAS Division.

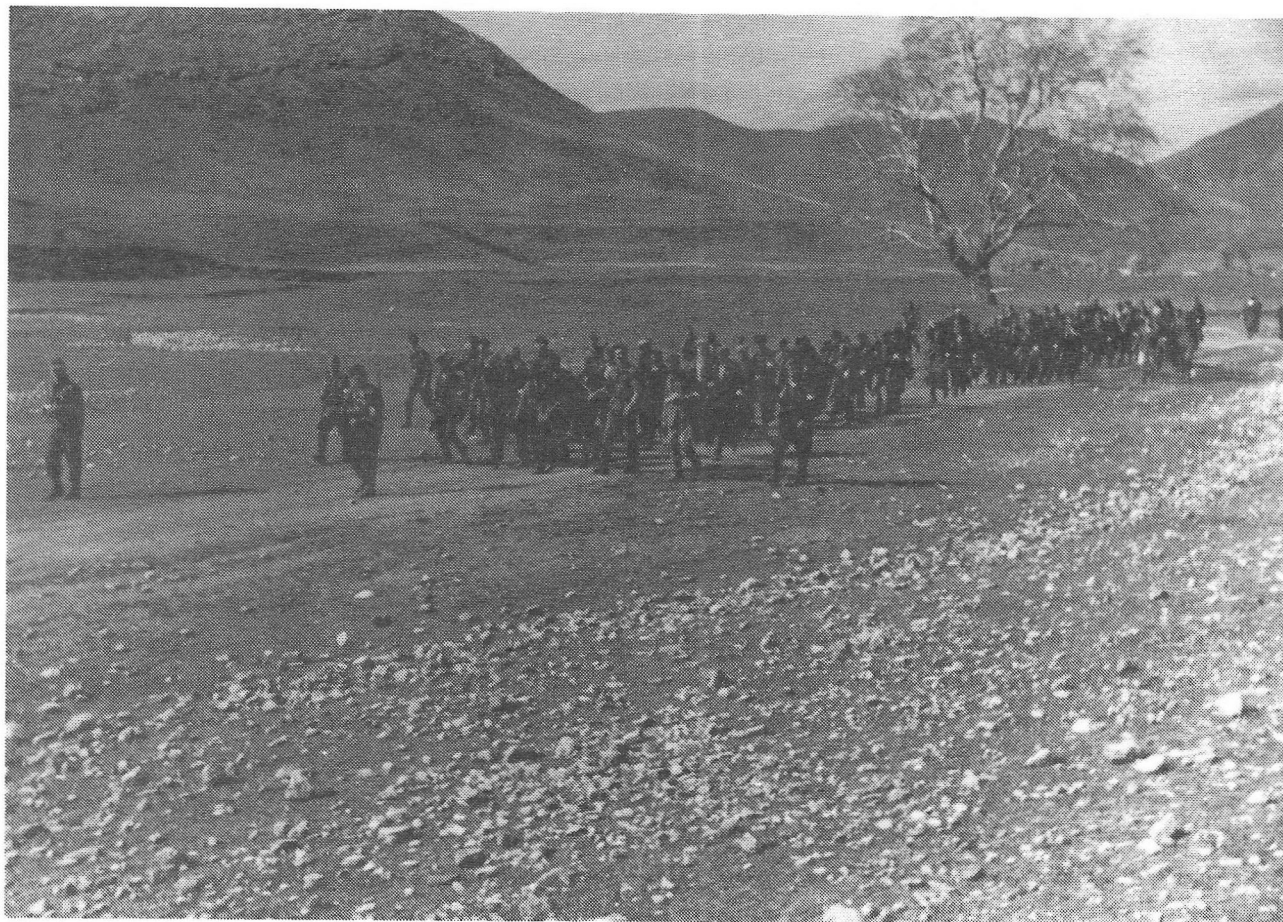
<sup>78</sup>

These batteries supported the IInd & IIIrd Battalions at Amfissa and Lamia afterwards.

<sup>79</sup>

Major-General Stefanos Sarafis, op cit. Page 458.

There were other anti-guerrilla operations launched jointly. The first two were conducted in 1943 and were launched in the area of operations of the XXII Mountain Corps. The first one was codenamed "Augustus" and was launched in August, 1943 in an area southwest of Yannina (in Epirus). In this operation the primary German unit was the 1st Mountain Division. Greek forces were negligible, and only included some translators and guides. The last major operation for 1943 was a four-step anti-partisan drive whose parts were codenamed "Panther," "Tiger," "Puma," and "Hubertus." These operations ran from October-November, 1943 and centered southeast of Yannina, in the southern Pindus Mountain region between Thessaly and Epirus.



ABOVE: Greek militiamen move towards an objective, somewhere in Greece, 1944. Notice that in the lead is a German SS NCO. Museum of Modern History, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Operation Panther was completed on October 26th, 1943 and was judged a complete success. Begun in earnest when a column of about 4,000 German infantrymen, supported by 8 tanks and by artillery, moved to try and reopen the Kalambaka-Yannina road. This force advanced from Trikkala towards Kalambaka. This force was drawn from the 4th SS Police Armored Infantry Division, which was in Greece for rest and reorganization. A second column of troops from the 1st Mountain Division advanced from Yannina itself towards Driskos, Baltouma bridge and Gotista.



A third column comprising the 2nd Brandenburg Regiment, advanced from Konitsa towards Zagoria.<sup>80</sup> During this 8 day battle, the 4th Regiment of the 1st ELAS Division was smashed and Kalambaka was taken on the evening of October 18th, 1943.

The next big anti-guerrilla drive was titled "Summer Thunderstorm." It lasted from April 7-11, 1944 in the Boeotia region, where around 3,000 Axis troops tried to clear the Helicon Mountain area of ELAS troops. In this operation, the Germans used the IIIrd Battalion/ SS-Police Regiment 7/ 4th SS Police Division<sup>81</sup>; Fortress Battalion 1010; and elements of the 11th Air Force Division, and the 845th German-Arab Battalion.<sup>82</sup> In addition, the Greek 1st Evzone Regiment from Athens supplied a battalion for the operation, while the 1st Police Volunteer Battalion (German & Italian troops) also took part. In this battle, the ELAS guerrillas were defeated, but Axis losses were 250 including 45 battalionists.<sup>83</sup>

Next came a large anti-guerrilla sweep in the northern peloponnes area involving parts of the 117th *Jaeger* Division and parts of the 41st Fortress Division, plus the Rallis forces stationed in Patras, Aegio, Argos, and Tripolis (see map of Peloponnes on page 27). This operation lasted from April 15th-27th and involved around 3,000 German troops and 1,000 battalionists.<sup>84</sup>

Operation "May Thunderstorm" which was launched on May 4th, 1944 in the region south of Edessa, Macedonia. Greek forces involved in this attack included elements of the IIIrd (Macedonian) Volunteer Battalion (from Edessa), and the 1st (Macedonian) Volunteer Battalion from Kastoria. German forces amounted to around 600 men from the 4th SS Division in the form of Battlegroup "Lange."

The *Andartes* for their part, were not just sitting back taking all of these offensives lying down. For example, on the night of June 1-2, a force of some five battalions from the 5th ELAS Brigade (13th Division), totalling 1,700 men, attacked the 7th, 9th, 10th, & 11th SS Companies/ 7th SS Panzergrenadier Regiment (4th SS Division), which were stationed in Amfissa.<sup>85</sup> The town also had a locally raised volunteer battalion for defense. Altogether, the German defenders could count on around 1,500 men. ELAS later claimed 150 enemy dead to their 75 killed and wounded.

June also brought a fresh assault against the 3rd ELAS Division in the southern Peloponnes (Operation "Viper,") which has already been discussed. In July Operation "Stone Eagle" was launched in the northern Pindus Mountains against elements of the 8th & 9th ELAS Division. The operation began on July 3rd and lasted until the 17th. German forces included a force of some 12-15,000 men, which even included some German raised Albanian *Balisti*.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Major-General Stefanos Sarafis, op cit. Page 435.

<sup>81</sup> Friedrich Husemann. "Die guten Glaubens waren. Geschichte der SS-Polizei-Division (4.SS-Polizei-Panzer-Grenadier-Division)." Munin-Verlag GmbH: Osnabrueck, 1973. Volume II, page 332.

<sup>82</sup> Antonio J. Munoz. "Lions of the Desert: Arab Volunteers in the German Army, 1941-1945." Axis Europa, Inc.: New York, 1995. Page 35.

<sup>83</sup> Major-General Stefanos Sarafis, op cit. Page 441.

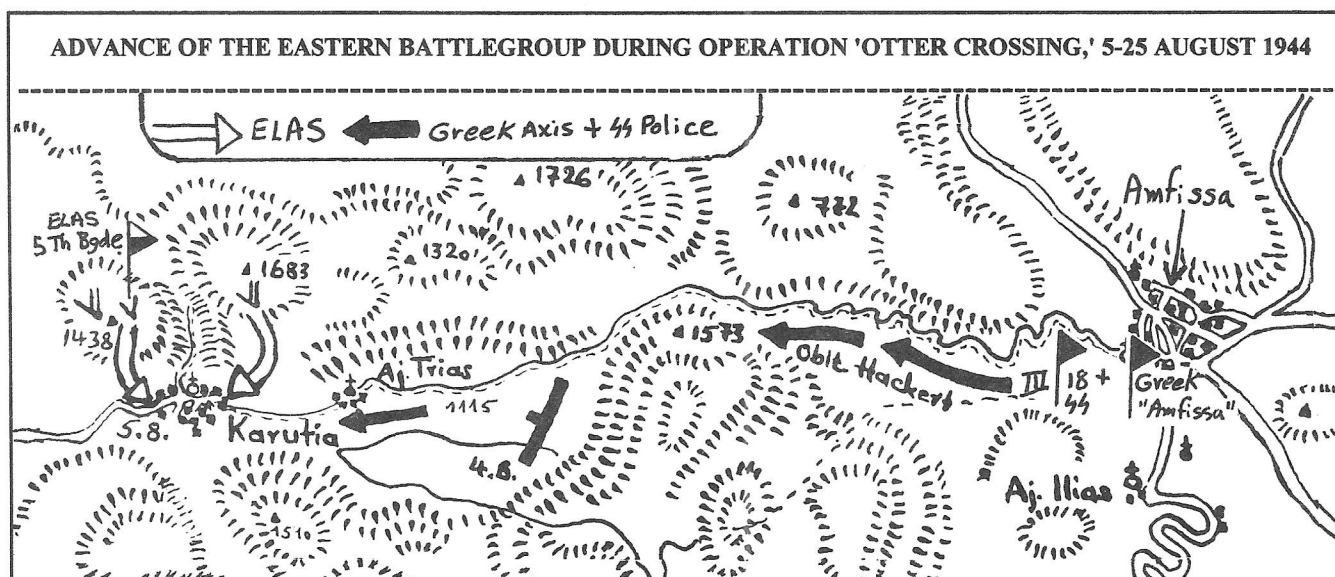
<sup>84</sup> Major-General Stefanos Sarafis, ibid. Page 443.

<sup>85</sup> Friedrich Husemann, op cit. Page 315.

<sup>86</sup> For more information on the *Balisti*, please see Axis Europa magazine, July-September 1996 issue (whole number 9).

Elements of the 4th SS Division, 639th Security Regiment, and 104th *Jaeger Division*. Greek and Italian troops were substantial, and included the following formations: The IIIrd, Vth, & VIth Volunteer Battalions from Kozani; The IIIrd Police Volunteer Battalion from Verria (Italians); The Ist (Macedonian) Volunteer Battalion from Kastoria; IInd (Macedonian) Volunteer Battalion from Florina; and parts of the 3rd Evzone Regiment from Yannina. Accounts from ELAS sources admit to the ferocity of this offensive, admitting that on account of this Axis attack, their forces became separated and cut off.

The last major anti-guerrilla operation to be launched in Greece was codenamed "*Kreuzotter*" (Otter Crossing). It was begun on August 5th and lasted till the 25th. The operation concentrated on the Karpenisi area and also included the region south of Karpenisi and west of Amfissa. This region was held by the German 104th *Jaeger Division*. Volunteer Battalion "Agrinio" took part in this operation, advancing with 104th Division troops from the Agrinio-Makrynia area towards Thermo and Aetopetra, entering Berikos on August 7th.<sup>87</sup>



Another force from Agrinio advanced towards Ayios Vlasis on August 6th, 1944. It then turned northwards and took Chouni and Sidera. On the 10th of August these 104th Division troops linked up with elements of the 18th SS Police Mountain Regiment, which were advancing from Amfissa<sup>88</sup> with a Greek volunteer battalion from that town. On August 11th, Viniani was captured by the combined German and Greek axis forces.

ELAS sources state that Karoutia was defended by 5th Brigade forces, which managed to inflict 150 losses on the 553-man battlegroup of the IIIrd Battalion/ 18th SS Police Mountain Regiment and Greek "Amfissa" Security Battalion.<sup>89</sup> By August 7th, a second police battalion advanced towards Karoutia but the town wasn't captured by German and Greek forces until 8.26.44.

<sup>87</sup> Major-General Stefanos Sarafis, op cit. Page 452.

<sup>88</sup> Hermann Franz. "Gebirgsjaeger der Polizei. Polizei-Gebirgsjaeger-Regiment 18 und Polizei-Gebirgs-Artillerieabteilung, 1942 bis 1945." verlag Hans-Henning Podzun: Bad Nauheim, 1963. Page 147.

<sup>89</sup> Hermann Franz, ibid. Page 147. According to Franz, 203 out this number were German police troops under Oberleutnant der Polizei Hackert.



LEFT: A Greek Officer of the security battalions. Notice the mixture of Greek and German Army insignia. U.S. National Archives.

On August 15th, in support of this last offensive, 4th SS police units attacked from the Helicon district. The months of August and September 1944 would prove that the Germans were losing all control of the countryside. The problem not only lay in the ever growing guerrilla menace, but at the advance of the Red Army during the summer of 1944, and the collapse of the southern German army group.

Compounding these German military reversals was the collapse of the Antonescu government in Rumania, and her subsequent declaration of war against Germany. Shortly after Rumania switched sides, Bulgaria did as

well. This only added urgency to the situation, since the entire German Army Group "E" in Greece was now threatened with being cut off. As a result, the decision to evacuate Greece was reached in August, 1944 and German forces began the withdrawal from the Peloponnes in late August.

Actually, Operation "Otter Crossing" was launched not so much to destroy further guerrilla forces, as it was launched to allow the safe withdrawal of German forces from the Peloponnes by way of the Gulf of Corinth and Patras. Left behind to fend for themselves were the vast majority of the Rallis security battalions. The 3rd ELAS Division and its five regiments had been harassing



the Greek and German forces since the summer. One notable mention was the attack on a government train on July 23rd at Routsi, near Megalopolis. In this attack, the train was blown up. It had been carrying around 350 men of the local Megalopolis Security Battalion. Later, ELAS claimed that 310 out of the 350 battalionists had been killed.<sup>90</sup>

Typically however, these guerrilla attacks were relatively small hit and run affairs (at least until the German withdrawal began in late August-September). On August 10th for example, in the southern Peloponnes, an ELAS force wiped out two platoons of German troops and killed 75 of them. Among the dead were 7 battalionists. The withdrawal from the Peloponnes was very noticeable. ELAS attempts to try and prevent or hinder it now began. On August 29th, another ELAS force from the 3rd Peloponnes Division attacked Germans and Greek Evzone troops at Skoupa, near Carinthia. They reported 80 enemy dead.

The ELAS guerrillas weren't sitting still on the mainland either. One of their biggest successes in September came between the 8th-12th of that month, when the Germans finally withdrew from Agrinio and Amfilochia. At Agrinio the remaining security battalion was forced to surrender with their arms. ELAS sources stated that around 1,000 battalionists surrendered there. Not all of Rallis's troops gave up that easily. Many fought hard and many a desperate, last-ditch battles were fought.

One such action took place between September 5th-20th at Pyrgos, in Elis. Kalamta was also very hotly contested, and all attempts to arrange a surrender were met with battalionist rifle fire. In these engagements, about another 1,000 battalionists were either killed or captured. Sparta, southeast of Tripolis, and Areopolis were abandoned by the Greek security units, who withdrew to Gythio. On September 19th, Argos was taken by 3rd Division forces. Inside Tripolis, the commander of the Greek security forces, Colonel Papadongonas, was formally asked to surrender but the amnesty promised ran out on September 16th. Thereupon fighting for Tripolis resumed without no end in sight. The Greek security forces at Tripolis clung on for dear life, for it had been rumored that many battalionists that surrendered had been killed by ELAS troops. Papadongonas was finally saved when British forces landed at Patras on October 4th. That same week he surrendered to a British force.

Security battalionists at Pyrgos weren't so lucky however, as it was reported that after a two-day battle, the men who surrendered to the *Andartes* there were shot. Those were the lucky ones. Seeking revenge for earlier abuses, some Greek collaborators paid dearly, as the following excerpt shows:

*"On Sunday, 17 September the former governor of Messina and other officials were brought back under ELAS guard from Meligala to Kalamata. As soon as they were marched into the main square, frenzied onlookers broke loose of the ELAS civil police and in ten minutes beat some of the prisoners to death, and strung the others up from lamp-posts. An American radio operator had a good view of the crowd:*

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<sup>90</sup> Major-General Stefanos Serafis, op cit. Page 449.

*'All of [them] wanted to get in some kind of a blow. Canes, clubs, knives, shoes, rocks, and everything anyone could strike a blow with were used on the group. This was their first chance at vengeance and they took it.'*<sup>91</sup>

Fighting began to wane after the surrender of Tripolis. On October 7th, Corinth was captured by ELAS. In this battle the 3rd Division captured 235 of Rallis Evzones and sent them directly to a concentration camp on Spetse. In the same week that Tripolis surrendered, the security battalions holed up in Gythio (Sythion) actually launched an attack on 3rd Division forces now holding Sparta. Their attempt was to actually try and reach British forces in order to surrender to them, but they were defeated on October 10th at Mistra when they were surrounded and forced to surrender.<sup>92</sup>

On October 12th, 1944 Athens was abandoned by the Germans. A day later on the 13th, British paratroopers landed on the Greek capital, and three days after that, the new Greek government followed.<sup>93</sup> Another source states that the new Greek government did not enter the capital until the 18th, but that aside from battles still being fought in the Peloponnes between ELAS forces and security battalionists, order reigned in the rest of the country.<sup>94</sup> In fact, the Germans were still in the process of withdrawing their forces, and still occupied most of Macedonia and parts of northern Epirus and Pindus.

On October 23rd, after a brief truce in which ELAS promised to spare them, battalionists surrendered at Monemvasia, in the Peloponnes. A day later, the Gendarmerie of Edessa (in Macedonia) surrendered as well, but the town was not entered until the 26th. On that same day, ELAS 10th Division forces also took Yiannitsa and Skydra. Three days later, they captured Verria, overrunning the local security forces there. This was the last major battle between the *Andartes* and the battalionists. For all intents and purposes, the guerrilla war as it dealt with the Germans and the collaborationist Rallis government was over, but before the year was over, EAM-ELAS was pitted against the newly installed Greek government.

In fact, many men of the new government of George Papandreou were former battalionists. A point in fact was Colonel Spiliotopoulos, appointed as the new military commander of the Athens area.<sup>95</sup> The political hatreds and aspirations which all interested parties felt for one another was just too great to stop once the Axis withdrew from Greece. In fact, one British officer commented that by the time the British arrived in Greece in 1942, *"the cards had already been dealt for a serious post-war disturbance."*<sup>96</sup> Now former battalionists would fight on the Papandreou government against EAM-ELAS. A bitter civil war still lay ahead of the starved and war ravaged Greek nation.

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<sup>91</sup> Mark Mazower, op cit. Page 358.

<sup>92</sup> Major-General Stefanos Serafis, op cit. Page 461.

<sup>93</sup> Janusz Piekalkiewicz. "Krieg auf dem Balkan 1940-1945." Suedwest Verlag: Muenchen, 1984. Page 281.

<sup>94</sup> E.C.W. Myers, Brigadier. "Greek Entanglement." Rupert Hart-Davis: London, 1955. Page 271.

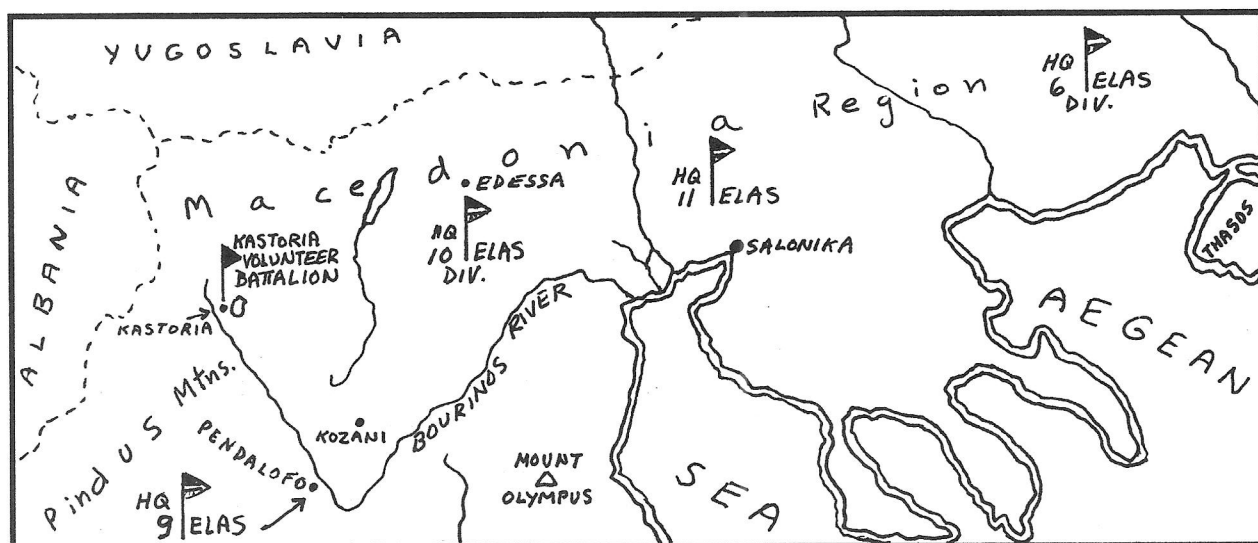
<sup>95</sup> Mark Mazower, op cit, Page 364.

<sup>96</sup> E.C.W. Myers, op cit. Page 284.

## IMRO AND VOLUNTEER BATTALION "KASTORIA"-

In the beginning of March, 1944 a local defense militia was organized in a very short time in the area of Kastoria, a town in Greek Macedonia not far from the Albanian border. This formation would eventually be used quite effectively in conjunction with German forces during anti-guerrilla sweeps and drives. It was also used on a regular basis as guard troops. They were all volunteers and the Germans found them very reliable.

The make up of these volunteers were as follows. Almost all of them were local farmers and farmers' sons, with some coming from the towns of the area. Many were old IMRO fighters from before the war.<sup>1</sup> In the middle of March 1944 Bulgarian officers arrived in order to take control of the fledgling battalion. The commander turned out to be a Bulgarian major who himself had been an old IMRO fighter from before the war (see note "1" below). German accounts mention that he was a strong, stately and overall very impressive man. This Bulgarian officer, whose name was Kaltchev, soon expanded the small cadre of volunteers, forming companies not only in Kastoria itself but in the surrounding communities, and even as far away as Platani, near Edessa.



By May 1944 bases of company strength sprung up around the countryside and the area around Kastoria, the local lake, and the vital Klissura Pass were soon in the militia's control. Altogether ten additional localities had been brought under the militia's control.

The volunteers wore Italian Army uniforms with armbands that were Red-Black with the inscription: "Volunteer Battalion Kastoria" in Yellow lettering. The Reserve Company of the Battalion was located in Kastoria itself and was supplied with machine-guns and even mortars.

<sup>1</sup> IMRO stands for "The Inner Macedonian Revolutionary Organization", which was the most powerful pre-war secret society, with members on both the "Yugoslav" Macedonian area, and the "Greek" Macedonian region. IMRO sought the independence of both Greek controlled and Yugoslav controlled Macedonia, wishing to unite both areas into a separate country. For obvious reasons, the Bulgarians, who wished to destabilize both Yugoslavia and Greece, secretly backed the Macedonian separatists. The Croatian Ustashe organization, headed by Dr. Ante Pavelic, wanted to assassinate King Alexander of Yugoslavia, they had no sufficiently trained assassins for the job. Pavelic appealed to IMRO to supply the men to do the job, and out of friendship, IMRO agreed. On October 9th, 1934 the Serbian king of Yugoslavia and the French Foreign Minister, Jean Barthou were murdered by IMRO assassins in Marseilles, France. For further reading, see the book: "The Secret Front" by Wilhelm Hoettl. Frederick A. Praeger: New York, 1954.



One "Marksman" Company from the battalion was detached in the summer of 1944 and assigned to a reinforced company of the 4th SS Police Armored Infantry Division which was making a sweep of the area. The move was an apparent success for everywhere that the Waffen-SS company and the "Kastoria" volunteer company went was soon cleared of guerrillas. The civilian population was so afraid of this battlegroup that their very presence in an area was enough to quiet any civilian protest.

Regular rotation of these volunteers to different bases and regions, plus the regular pay and allowances like German forces received was a great aid in keeping the morale of these volunteers up and in no case was any of these volunteer bases ever successfully attacked by the Communist guerrilla bands. In the beginning of May 1944 the Waffen-SS company that had been in the area was unexpectedly withdrawn. This move was a "Green light" for the local guerrilla regiment of the 9th ELAS Partisan Division to launch a series of attacks aimed at taking control of not only the towns and hamlets in the region, but the vitally important Klissura Pass as well.

The volunteer battalion was outnumbered and was forced to withdraw the area in the second week of May, 1944. It withdrew towards the direction of Salonika, but an urgent message to the German Military Commander in Salinka managed to convince the German command of the need to supply replacement German troops with which to regain control of the town of Kastoria and the Klissura Pass as well. The "Volunteer Battalion Kastoria" was turned around and sent forward, now reinforced by a German rifle company.

Soon the Klissura Pass was reached without incident and recaptured. A volunteer company of the "Kastoria" Battalion, formed from volunteers from Vassiliada and Vevi was the first to advance on Kastoria, entering the town on May 29th. The company had begun receiving rifle and machine-gun fire when it reached the Argos-Orestikon area, but quickly pushed ahead and attacked the town head on. The attack was so quick and fast, that the headquarters' company of a Partisan unit which had made its residence in the town was captured by the militiamen.

This major success was offset two days later, when the "Vermio" Detachment (belonging to the ELAS 9th Partisan Division) attacked a force organized by Major Kaltchev at Platani, near Edessa, killing 50 of the militiamen during the fierce, three hour battle. ELAS accounts boasted that their losses only included 5 dead and 30 wounded.<sup>2</sup> This battle would not be forgotten, and as it turned out, was to be the forerunner of the worst disaster to befall the Kastoria Volunteer Battalion, when in September of the same year, two of its companies would be wiped out in the defense of Edessa by a combined ELAS 9th & 10th Partisan Division attack.

At the end of August, 1944 Bulgaria switched sides and began to back the Soviet Union. Now Bulgarian forces that had before garrisoned Thrace were the enemy. The Bulgarian officers who led the Kastoria Battalion remained loyal however, and did not return to their country. Their motives for remaining may have been two-fold. First, they were long-time members of the very nationalistic (and therefore anti-Communist) IMRO. Their very political beliefs prevented them to serve in a Bulgaria ruled by Moscow. Secondly, they might have been afraid to return home for fear that they would be put in jail (or worse) by the new Bulgarian government.

<sup>2</sup>

Major-General Stefanos Serafis. "ELAS: Greek Resistance Army." Merlin Press: London, 1980. Page 445.

This fear was a real one, borne out by the following statement regarding events in the Bulgarian held region of Thrace:

*"Within a few days an anti-Fascist revolt took place in the 2nd Bulgarian Army Corps. The anti-Fascists took over command, arrested the Fascist general, Sirakov, revoked the Sirakov-Tsaous Andon agreement, handed over control to the Greek civil authorities, arrested all the Bulgarian Fascists and war criminals, and moved against our common enemy, the Germans."*<sup>3</sup>

On August 31st, 1944 as a small convoy of vehicles carrying men of the Kastoria Battalion was headed towards Salonika when ELAS guerrillas ambushed them. In the ensuing battle, the German liaison officer attached to the battalion, plus two Bulgarian officers and 22 militiamen were killed. The end in Greece was coming quickly now and finally the Battalion was ordered to begin a withdrawal from Kastoria. The Klissura Pass was already in guerrilla hands, so the withdrawal had to be made under enemy fire.

The militiamen finally abandoned Kastoria on September 7th, 1944. They crossed into Yugoslav Macedonia with only two companies of volunteers, who among them had twenty Greek Macedonian NCO's, while the rest were enlisted men. A new German liaison officer had by then been attached to the unit and the Bulgarian officers were still leading the unit. Records available do not indicate the fate of the two remaining companies of the Kastoria Battalion, but it is almost certain that they lingered in Yugoslav Macedonia for some time, but almost certainly moved northwards following the German withdrawal.

#### EASAD AND THE VILLAGE MILITIA COMPANIES OF THESSALY-

In the spring of 1944 the German SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*, or Security Police) helped to finance and organize a movement in the Greek region of Thessaly. Thessaly is roughly located in central-eastern Greece. The organization was headed by a former Greek Gendarmerie officer named Takis Makedon. The movement was virulently anti-Communist in nature, and its initial 3-400 recruits were drawn from local farmers and farmer's sons- most of whom had personal grievances with EAM-ELAS (the Communist guerrillas).<sup>4</sup>

These grievances varied from the levying of "taxes" on the farmers by ELAS "for the war effort," to the forceful "acquisition" of the farmer's animals and other foodstuffs. In some cases, the locals had lost a relative or family member to the guerrillas for one reason or another. In the latter extreme case, the grudge was much more severe and captured ELAS guerrillas paid for the sins of their compatriots with their very lives.

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<sup>3</sup> Major-General Stefanos Sarafis, *ibid.* Page 409.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Mazower. "Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-1944." Yale University Press: New Haven, 1993. Page 335.

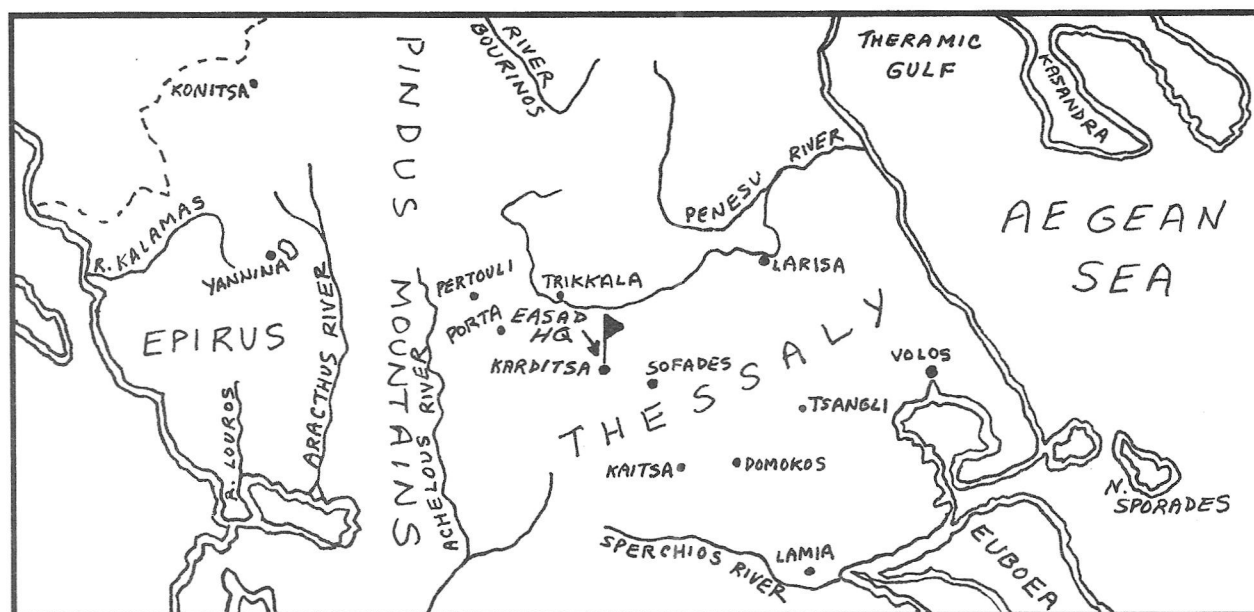
RIGHT & BELOW: A member of the EASAD militia. Although the armband appears to be White it was in fact, Green although we cannot discount slight variations, or the occasional exception to the rule. Aside from the rifle and bandolier, these volunteers wore civilian attire. Photo credit: Bundesarchiv and the U.S. National Archives.





The name of this movement in Greek was *Ethnikos Andartikos Sinaspismos Andikommunistikis Draseos*, which has been variously translated as "National Guerrilla Anti-Communist Action Alliance," by a pro-ELAS work, to "National Agricultural Federation of Anti-Communist Action" in a recent study by a Yale university professor. Irregardless of the proper title, it is certain that (1) the movement was staunchly nationalistic and anti-Communist, and (2) the bulk of its volunteers were farmers.

True to its anti-Communist theme, the first proclamation which was made over Radio Athens, announcing the movement's foundation, was typical and no attempt was made to hide the nature, goals, and designs of the movement. Takis Makedon stated that Greece was "a cemetery awash in blood," and that the movement was founded by "pure Greeks to ward off the possibility of the Red Flag being planted on the ruins of our land."<sup>5</sup>



The unit's headquarters was the town of Karditsa, which had a strong German garrison, but its militia platoons and companies were spread out amongst the hamlets, towns, and villages of the region. Initially only a company was formed in the end of March, 1944 but by the end of April numerous other company sized units had been formed across Thessaly. At its peak during the summer months of 1944, the EASAD militia units could boast of having some 1,000 members in about 13-15 major localities.

Even the port town of Volos, on the Gulf of Pagasae formed its own EASAD militia from local youths, street toughs, and farmers. The town mayor, a supporter of Napoleon Zervas's nationalist (and therefore anti-Communist) EDES guerrilla movement, had been instrumental in inviting EASAD to Volos. Although initially financed by the German SD, the militia was poorly armed, having no major heavy weapons to speak of. Armaments were mostly bolt-action rifles of Greek, Italian, and German manufacture. Aside from a Green armband, which was worn on the left sleeve, the militiamen wore civilian clothes, with the occasional ammo pouch or bandoleer.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Mazower, *ibid.* Page 335.

RIGHT: Greek village militiamen. They seem to belong to Takis Makedon's EASAD militia companies. Museum of Modern History, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

BELOW: An excellent photograph showing Greek Gendarmes, village militiamen, and even some security battalionists, together in a trenchline. The local village militiamen, whether EASAD, IM-RO, or otherwise, were often intermingled with the more experienced Gendarmes and security battalionists in order to "stiffen" their ranks. Bundesarchiv.



The armband was adorned with a handwritten stylized Swastika, Greek flag, and the Roman numeral of the militia company which the member belonged to. Arms included a variety of weapons of Greek, German, and Italian manufacture- mostly bolt-action rifles, and some pistols for the local commanders.

By the end of April 1944 the EASAD militia in Karditsa had been raised to three companies, while additional militia units of roughly company strength were established in Pertouli, Porta, Kaitsa, Domokos, Tsangli, Larisa, Volos, Kastania Itamou (SW of Karditsa), Lamia, Topouzklar, Stylida (east of Lamia), Demerli (E-SE of Sofades), and even in villages near the towns of Kozani and Kastoria, between the northern Pindus Mountains and western Macedonia.

Whereever possible, these EASAD militiamen were grouped with local Gendarmerie, or Greek Security Battalionists, in order to make them more effective. German units also used them, not only as interpreters and guides, but as auxiliary units during their anti-partisan sweeps. In fact, the main Trikkala-Porta road was frequently patrolled by a combined force of Germans and EASAD militiamen.<sup>6</sup>

The EASAD militiamen continued their anti-Communist activity up to and following the German withdrawal from Greece. In fact, its leader, Takis Makedon gave his men a choice of staying and continuing the fight against ELAS under the new Greek government, or withdrawing with the Germans. Many chose a third alternative- they surrendered to ELAS units, many switching sides. This even occurred as early as September 2nd, 1944 when 70 EASAD militiamen surrendered to an ELAS unit, asking its commander if they could join en-masse. On the following day (September 3rd) two armed EASAD villages, one near Kozani and the other by Kastoria both surrendered to ELAS without a fight.

About two company sized units of EASAD militiamen decided to withdraw with the German 4th SS "Polizei" Armored Infantry Division in late August, 1944. The Germans were glad to have them, for their T&OE strength of Russian auxiliaries (called Hiwis, short for *Hilfswilliger*) had shrunk to 940 men as of March 1st. An additional 714 "Hiwis" were needed.<sup>7</sup> The Greek militiamen were dispersed among the various units of the Division as soon as the "Polizei" had left Greek territory. They served with this SS Division throughout the rest of the war, most of them surrendering to Red Army units near Danzig in April, 1945.

As for Takis Makedon himself, he was captured by an ELAS unit during the winter of 1944.<sup>8</sup> He was said to have committed suicide before he came to trial, but sources who knew how ELAS operated alude to the possibility that Makedon could have been murdered by his captors. The overwhelming majority of EASAD members continued their anti-Communist activities when civil war broke out between EAM/ELAS and the new pro-British Greek government in Athens. In this their history paralleled that of other collaborationist forces, most of whom were put to work fighting the ELAS Communists as early as December, 1944.

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<sup>6</sup> Major-General Stefanos Sarafis, op cit. Page 358.

<sup>7</sup> Friedrich Husemann. "Die guten Glaubens waren. Geschichte der SS-Polizei-Division (4.SS-Polizei-Panzer-Grenadier-Division)" Munin Verlag GmbH: Osnabrueck 1973. Volume II, page 603.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Mazower, op cit. Page 336.



## COLONEL GEORGE POULOS AND THE *POULOS-VERBAND* OF MACEDONIA-

Colonel George Poulos was just another unknown Greek Army reserve (engineer) officer when he volunteered his services to the Germans in the spring of 1943. Although up until then, his political background was considered Republican, his right-wing nationalist feelings were soon to surface. He was anti-Monarchist and did not desire a return of the Greek king. But if his feelings against the Greek monarchy was strong, his revulsion for Communism was even greater.

It was this un-assuming, and almost insignificant, short and overweight man who would eventually form and lead the most feared collaborationist formation in Greece during the years of 1943-44. In fact, his unit would prove so effective and so detested, that after the German withdrawal from Greece, Poulos and his men would be forced to withdraw with the Germans, lest they fall prey to the vengeance of the ELAS Communists. The Germans actually inducted the battalion which he formed into their Order Police organization, and used the unit in Yugoslavia in the fall and winter of 1944-45.

When Colonel Poulos came forward to assist the Germans in Salonika (his home city), it was at a time when the Germans, Italians, and Bulgarians were experiencing a marked increase in the number of Greek guerrilla attacks. By this time, a steady rift had developed between those Greeks who wished a post-war government in the style of Communist Russia, and other sections of Greek society who either desired a Monarchist or Constitutional (Republican) administration.

These diversely different opinions which had up until then been kept mostly bottled up in the arguments and discussions of Greek universities, cafes, and taverns, were now taken to the hills, villages, and countryside where these un-compromising political ideals were settled by the barrel of a gun.

The Axis occupying powers, ever in need of support, did not fail to see the opportunity which now sprang up in front of their eyes, to expand this rift in Greek society. By supporting the anti-Communist elements in the country, the Axis aided the internecine warfare that developed. Divide and conquer was the watchword, and in this the Germans excelled. The Italians had earlier tried to raise Greek volunteers, but because they were so hated and despised, they could barely keep the local Greek governments and constabulary in line.

The Germans, and to a lesser degree, the Bulgarians were the ones who would be most effective in recruiting Greek volunteers to their cause; The Germans because they were respected as excellent soldiers and the Greeks were quite honestly impressed by the military feats which the Germans had been able to accomplish. Additionally, a small segment of Greek society was strongly Fascist, and therefore backed the Nazis.

The Bulgarians worked on the old Macedonian desire for greatness such as they had experienced during the reign of Alexander the Great of Macedonia. Supporting Macedonian groups who wished to have both Greek and Yugoslav Macedonia joined as an independent country, the Bulgarians were able to recruit Greeks as well.

It was only natural then, that Colonel George Poulos offered his services to the Germans. He was assigned to Sonderkommando 2000, a German counter-intelligence unit which was then operating in the city of Salonika.<sup>9</sup> It was in the summer of 1943 that Poulos, feeling frustrated at not being able to combat the growing Communist menace in the countryside, requested and was granted permission to raise a volunteer detachment.

He quickly recruited several hundred Greek volunteers, and quartered them in the heavily fortified village of Krya-Vrissi, just outside of Salonika. Krya-Vrissi would become the headquarters and home base for Poulos's formation, although for operations in eastern and central Macedonia, the town of Verria would become the main staging area for his anti-partisan sweeps.



**LEFT:** Region and area of operations of the Poulos Volunteer Battalion. The extent of their area of operations is depicted by broken arrows

Operations against the Communist ELAS guerrillas began almost immediately from the start of the unit's formation. A German liaison officer, Kurt Tobias, was soon attached to the headquarters' staff in order to better coordinate German moves with Poulos's units.

It wasn't until September 1943 however, that the German Order Police officially acknowledged Poulos's unit as a structural part of their organization in Greece, assigning its headquarters platoon and three rifle companies (Nos.1-3) a Field Post (No.17 571).<sup>10</sup> At best, Colonel Poulos was able to recruit about 400-450 men. With the exception of the Colonel himself, who wore his Greek Army engineer officer's uniform, the entire battalion was outfitted in German Army uniforms, complete with German weapons.

During September of 1943 the *Poulos-Verband*, as the Germans initially referred to the unit, was attached to the German 2nd Brandenburg (Commando) Regiment, then stationed in and around the Macedonian town of Ptolemais. together, they made numerous anti-guerrilla sweeps in western and central Macedonia, razing every village to the ground which offered them any opposition. Suspected Communists were summarily shot and, although Poulos sowed fear into those civilians who were thinking of joining the guerrillas, the eventual shooting and hanging of innocent civilians had a detrimental effect on how the public perceived his formation.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Mazower, *ibid.* Page 338.

<sup>10</sup> H.-J. Neufeldt, J. Huck, Georg Tessin. "Zur Geschichte der Ordnungspolizei 1936-1945." Als Manuskript gedruckt: Koblenz, 1957. Part II, page 73.

In January, 1944 Poulos's volunteer battalion received an influx of about 90-100 Greeks from the island of Crete. It seems that this company-sized unit had been raised in Crete by a German *Geheim-Feldpolizei* (Secret Field Police) Sergeant named Fritz Schubert. Sergeant Schubert had in his ranks not only his Cretan volunteers, but Germans from some of the penal and fortress battalions which made their appearance on Greek soil in the fall of 1943.

Sergeant Schubert, who spoke fluent Greek, was able to recruit many Greek volunteers. Many were ardent anti-Communists, but most were either unemployed roughnecks, opportunists, or simply bored young Cretans who yearned for adventure. They all shared a taste for pillaging and cruelty however, and soon entire Crete villages would be emptied with the cries of "*Run! the Schubertiani<sup>11</sup> are coming!*"



ABOVE: Colonel Poulos (front row, 2nd from left), and other Greek volunteers from his unit. Notice that all are wearing German army uniforms, with the exception of Poulos himself and some village militiamen. Bundesarchiv.

The local Communist ELAS unit in Crete was the 2,000-strong 5th ELAS Division. This unit had sworn to destroy the *Schubertiani* through all possible recourse and means, and soon Sergeant Schubert's formation could not venture out of Chania without being heavily escorted by a large Wehrmacht force. In effect, the unit lost most of its effectiveness, since it could no longer venture out to the hills.

<sup>11</sup>

Sergeant Fritz Schubert's formation came to be known as the "*Schubertiani*."



Additionally, the commander of the German 22nd Air Transportable Division (then stationed on the island) detested Schubert and his men. He felt that the *Schubertiani* were a detriment to winning over the population of the island over to the German side. The decision was thus taken to transfer Schubert and his men to the mainland and employ them as part of a larger force of Greek volunteers. This is how they ended up in Verria with Colonel Poulos in the beginning of 1944.

Most of the anti-guerrilla sweeps which Poulos's unit took part in were mainly centered on units of Colonel Kalambalikis's 10th ELAS Partisan Division. Units of the 10th and 11th ELAS Divisions did not hesitate in countering Poulos's terror with counter-terror. These attacks aimed personally at the *Poulos-Verband* began in earnest in the spring of 1944. At first they were harrasing attacks, but eventually coordinated efforts were made by the ELAS command at trying to not only neutralize Poulos's effectiveness, but to attempt and destroy the unit altogether.

On April 6th, 1944 for example, a 10th ELAS Division force from Vermio attacked a unit of Poulos's men at Verria during their roll-call, and after the battle was over, claimed to have killed an estimated 83 men.<sup>12</sup> Another attack on Verria occurred that same month, when about twenty *andartes* (guerrillas) slipped into the town and opened up with automatic weapons while Poulos and many of his men were dining in the town school. About 100 of Poulos's men were killed, but Colonel Poulos evaded death.<sup>13</sup>

The next time that the Communists were very successful at striking a hard blow against Poulos's battalion was on July 12th, 1944. An ELAS 10th Division force attacked a column of Poulos's men and Germans from the 639th Security Regiment<sup>14</sup> In this battle, the Germans lost 12 men killed, while 29 Greeks together with officers, were forced to surrender.<sup>15</sup>

Poulos's formation eventually relocated his staging area to his headquarters in Krya-Vrisi during August, 1944. The town of Verria had become too exposed for he and his men. In fact, the whole Axios Valley to the west of Salonika was a hot-bed of guerrilla activity. During the second week of September, 1944 the Axios Valley town of Yiannitsa stood in the way of yet another combined Greek-German anti-guerrilla sweep.

On September 14th Poulos and his men entered Yiannitsa. First to arrive was Sergeant Schubert and his *Schubertiani*, who immediately killed a town clerk with clubs and iron bars. What followed next was described by professor Mark Mazower in a recent study about the German occupation of Greece:

*"By the time Poulos appeared, in Greek army uniform, six other men had been battered to death. Poulos simply made a short speech to the terrified civilians, and left again. By mid-afternoon many more*

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<sup>12</sup> Major-General Stefanos Sarafis, op cit. Page 441.

<sup>13</sup> Mark Mazower, op cit. Page 339.

<sup>14</sup> This German security regiment contained 2-3 battalions, one of which was the 516th Security Battalion, which had been reinforced by the addition of ethnic-German Greeks, and some pure Greek and Italian volunteers. [See "The History of the Serbian State & Frontier Guard, 1941-1945" Part II, in AXIS EUROPA magazine, Volume I, No.2 (March-April 1995), page 7.]

<sup>15</sup> Major-General Stefanos Sarafis, op cit. Pages 447-48.

*people had been murdered, among them a woman who worked as an interpreter for the German commander. The final death toll amounted to at least seventy-five, not including people who were shot at random as they worked in their fields. Poulos's men took the victim's clothes, shoes, money and valuables, and burned many houses.... As soon as the paramilitaries drove away, the survivors fled into the countryside. Wenger, a Swiss Red Cross worker, arrived in the town two days later, and found himself in a 'dead city'..... Wenger finally caught up with Poulos at his heavily fortified headquarters in the village of Krya-Vrysi just outside of Salokina. He found the stocky colonel in a combative mood. Poulos told Wenger to take his complaints to the andartes, who were responsible for 'the entire situation'. He showed no remorse, and made his low opinion of the Red Cross clear."<sup>16</sup>*

Two days later an ELAS 10th Division force took revenge when they ambushed a column of German vehicles from the 639th Security Regiment, and the *Poulos-Verband* on the Verria-Kastoria road. German dead included 40 men of the regiment, while two were missing and presumed taken prisoner. The Gestapo<sup>17</sup> group traveling with the Poulos unit lost two men, while three of Poulos's lieutenants were also killed. In this attack, five German vehicles were also destroyed. September was a hectic one for the German forces in Greece. The German retreat from that country began in late September, and this was also marked by an increase in partisan activity. This could also partly explain the incident at Yiannitsa and the actions of Poulos's men, who behaved as if out of anger, frustration, and desperation at the fate that awaited them after a German defeat.

By October 26th, the towns of Edessa, Skydra, and Yiannitsa were in ELAS 10th Division hands. Three days later, on the 29th the Communist guerrillas took the town of Verri<sup>18</sup>. For Poulos and his men, the time had come to leave Greece. His unit was sent north to Ljubljana, Slovenia where it was reorganized and continued to serve as an auxiliary police battalion under the Higher-SS & Police Leader "Alpenland" (XVIIIth SS Military District).

In March, 1945 Poulos and his men were transferred to western Austria and was ordered to fight the advancing US forces under the German 1st Army. He refused and was ordered to report with his unit to Kitzbuehl, Austria where the "Greek National Committee" had been established. The unit remained there until the end of the war, guarding such Serbian and Greek collaborationists as His Holiness Gavrilo, Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Serbian Prime Minister Milan Nedic, Greek Finance Minister Tsironikos, Interior Minister Anastasios Tavoularis, and other Greek, Serbian, and even Bulgarian collaborators. At war's end, Poulos and Schubert were both extradicted to Greece, where they stood trial for their actions during the war. Both were hanged in 1946. It is interesting to note that no other Greek collaborators who were put on trial were ever hanged. In fact, many only served brief sentences if any at all.

<sup>16</sup> Mark Mazower, op cit. Page 337.

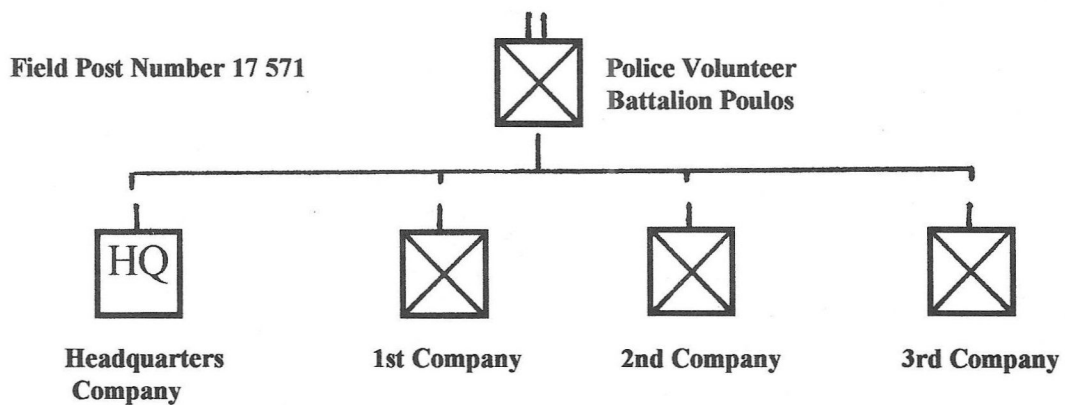
<sup>17</sup> Gestapo is short for *Geheimstaatspolizei*, or State Secret Police.

<sup>18</sup> Major-General Stefanos Sarafis, op cit. Page 464.

BELOW: Colonel George Poulos, riding on horseback. Although he wears a Greek Army uniform, notice that just above the right breast pocket he is wearing the German eagle and swastika breast emblem. The photograph below was taken on July 27th, 1944. Museum of Modern History, Ljubljana, Slovenia.



### Organization Of The *POULOS VERBAND* - February, 1945







ABOVE: The POULOS-VERBAND parading through the streets of Krya-Vrissi, July 26h, 1944. Museum of Modern History, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

## FORMATION OF THE HIGHER-SS & POLICE COMMAND "GREECE"-

The *Hoeheren-SS und Polizeifuehrer "Griechenland"* (Higher SS & Police Leader "Greece") command was established in 1943 at the instigation of the National Leader of the SS, Heinrich Himmler. Until early October, 1943 the security work, such as interrogations, executions, and counter-espionage had been performed by the *Geheim Feldpolizei* (Secret Field Police).<sup>45</sup> After the withdrawal of Italy from the Axis in 1943, Greece was occupied completely by the German armed forces. The current armed forces commander, based in the port of Salonika, became the Military Commander "Greece." In addition, the Army Group "E" command was also based in Salonika. Military Commander "Greece" was subordinated to Army Group "E."

In turn, the Army Group "E" command was subordinated to the Military Commander "Southeast," which was stationed in Belgrade, Yugoslavia since 1941. Ioannis Rallis, a conservative Greek politician, was appointed Prime Minister of the Greek government in 1943 by the Germans. He led the Greek government between 1943-44. In September 1943 the Higher-SS & Police Leader "Greece" was formed and given the task of arranging new combat formations and to use them to fight the growing guerrilla menace. The Higher-SS & Police Leader "Greece"

<sup>45</sup> U.S. National Archives, Case M-893, "The United States of America vs. Wilhelm List et al (Case VII). Roll No.4, 20-25 August, 1947. Pages 2470-2475.

command was only to be answerable to the *Reichsfuehrer-SS* (National Leader of the SS) Heinrich Himmler, but the command had to keep the army command informed of their actions and operations. In effect, the HSSPF "Greece" was a power unto themselves.<sup>46</sup> Upon arrival of the SS & SD in Greece, the *Geheimfeldpolizei* was relegated to concerning itself



ABOVE: Greek village militiamen, armed by the German SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*), or Security Service. Note the German SD man, squatting, arms crossed, on the extreme right hand side of the photograph. The skull & crossbones can be clearly seen on his softcover, but more telling is the same symbol on his right collar tab. Museum of Modern History, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

with purely military and minor civilian cases only, while the SS & SD now performed all of the "dirty work."<sup>47</sup> The first commander of the Higher SS & Police Leader "Greece" command was SS General Juergen Stroop. His appointment had been a kind of reward for destroying the Warsaw ghetto in the spring of 1943. In his own words he describes the appointment and the mission with which Himmler had assigned to him:

<sup>46</sup> Ruth Bettina Birn. "Die Hoeheren SS - und Polizeifuehrer: Himmlers Vertreter im Reich und in den besetzten Gebieten." Droste Verlag GmbH: Duesseldorf, 1986. Page 275.

<sup>47</sup> U.S. National Archives, Case M-893, op cit. Roll 4, pages 2470-2475.

*situation in the capital was touchy, and we were afraid that the Greek Ministry of Interior might be losing control. Moreover, Mussolini had fallen that July, and we knew Marshal Badoglio was negotiating secretly with the Allies for a separate peace. It seemed imperative to act quickly to ensure some sort of order on Europe's southeastern front. In order to concentrate on the endangered southern flank, the General Staff insisted that the Wehrmacht be relieved of its occupation duties in Greece. Posting me to Athens in the newly created post of Higher-SS & Police Leader would kill two birds with one stone. Questionable Greek elements would be more effectively suppressed by my specialized forces, and the German Army would be freed to attend to vital business elsewhere.*<sup>48</sup>

Stroop left for Greece with his entire staff of 11 officers and NCO's. On his way there, he stopped off in Belgrade (Yugoslavia) and it was then that he heard that Marshal Badoglio had surrendered to the Allies. A day after his arrival in Salonika, Stroop met with Prime Minister Ioannis Rallis, and Foreign Minister Tavoularis. During this meeting, Stroop spelled out several new directives which he wished to implement:

*"One: as of today, you both will be personally responsible to me, as chief representative of Adolf Hitler and Heinrich Himmler, for any question involving internal policy. Two: Greece will be divided up into nine police districts, each to be headed by a Greek police officer, abetted by a senior German police officer who, in his role of special consultant, will have the final decision in all important matters. Three: security forces in each of the nine districts will consist of Greek police units, implemented by units from the eighteenth German police regiment, augmented in turn by German police artillery troops."*<sup>49</sup>

Apparently, Stroop was able to significantly begin to increase the Greek police force and improved their pay and benefits, but this enlargement of the Gendarmerie and security battalions had begun in April, 1943. Stroop merely supplemented to its increase. His attempts to control the guerrillas proved elusive however, and he was soon replaced by SS General Walter Schimana. He left Greece as a newly promoted *SS-Gruppenfuehrer*, and lieutenant-general of the police. Stroop's "release from duty in Greece" had been due to his political "insensitivity" when treating the collaborationists in the Greek government.<sup>50</sup> Apparently, as the new head of the SS in Greece, Walter Schimana, an old Gendarmerie officer from Vienna, ignored politics and began in earnest

<sup>48</sup> Kazimierz Moczarski. "Conversations With An Executioner: An incredible 255-day long interview with the man who destroyed the Warsaw ghetto." Prentice Hall, Inc.: Englewood Cliffs, 1981. Page 190.

<sup>49</sup> Kazimierz Moczarski, *ibid.* Page 194.

<sup>50</sup> Mark Mazower, *op cit.* Page 223.



Stroop's "release from duty in Greece" had been due to his political "insensitivity" when treating the collaborationists in the Greek government.<sup>50</sup> Apparently, as the new head of the SS in Greece, Walter Schimana, an old Gendarmerie officer from Vienna, ignored politics and began in earnest to expand the Greek police force.<sup>51</sup> Schimana's efforts bore fruit and he soon raised three police volunteer battalions (made up mostly of Italians), a police cavalry squadron, and three "Evzone" regiments.<sup>52</sup>

The men of the Evzone regiments were at first required to swear an oath of allegiance not only to the Rallis government, but to Germany as well. This led Ioannis Rallis to threaten his resignation if this double oath continued, so it was withdrawn.<sup>53</sup> A document held at the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz, dated 2 November, 1944 (a time when Greece was almost completely out of German control due to their withdrawal), stated that SS General Schimana had amassed the following Greek forces:

1,600 men of the Greek Gendarmerie  
16,625 men of the volunteer battalions  
5,725 men of the Evzone regiments  
23,950 Greek volunteers (not counting the village militia forces)<sup>54</sup>

The number of KdO's<sup>55</sup> formed included the following localities: KdO Attika, with the headquarters in Athens; KdO Peloponnes, with the headquarters in Korinth; KdO Macedonia, with headquarters in Salonika; KdO Thessaly, with headquarters in Larissa. There seems to be a conflict as to what was the term for the KdO whose headquarters was based in the city of Yannina. One source states that it was called KdO Arta<sup>56</sup>, while another source calls it KdO Epirus-North<sup>57</sup>. Finally, there was KdO Epirus South, whose seat was located in Agrinion, and KdO Boeotia, with headquarters in Levadia.

The KdO's located in Attika, Macedonia, and Thessaly were all organized in December, 1943; While the KdO in the Peloponnes and in Epirus-North (aka Arta) were only organized in February, 1944.<sup>58</sup> The KdO's were subordinate to the BdO (*Befehlshaber der Ordnungspolizei*, or Senior Police Commander) "Greece," which was headed by *Oberst der Schutzpolizei* (Colonel of the Police) Hermann Franz. Hermann Franz had at one time led the *SS-Polizei-Gebirgs-jaeger-Regiment 18* (18th SS Police Mountain Regiment), and the attached *SS-Polizei-Gebirgs-Artillerieabteilung* (SS-Police Artillery Battalion). These German Order Police formations were transferred from Finland to Greece in 1943 in order to support the Greek government police forces in their fight against the *Andartes*.

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<sup>50</sup> Mark Mazower, op cit. Page 223.

<sup>51</sup> Mark Mazower, *ibid.* Page 224.

<sup>52</sup> H.-J. Neufeldt, et al, op cit. Page 73.

<sup>53</sup> Ruth Bettina Birn. "Die Hoeheren SS - und Polizeifuehrer: Himmlers Vertreter im Reich und in den besetzten ." Droste Verlag GmbH: Duesseldorf, 1986. Page 275.

<sup>54</sup> Bundesarchiv Koblenz, NS-19, Nr. des Aktenbandes 3695, Folio Nr. 1/19 (Datum: 2.11.44 - Drei seiten). Pages 1-3.

<sup>55</sup> *Kommandeur der Ordnungspolizei*, or Commander of the Order Police.

<sup>56</sup> H.-J. Neufeldt, et al, op cit. Page 72.

<sup>57</sup> Bundesarchiv Koblenz, NS-19, op cit. Page 3.

<sup>58</sup> H.-J. Neufeldt, et al, op cit. Page 72.

RIGHT: SS General Walter Schimana, inspecting Greek Evzone troops, and their weapons, sometime in 1944. Bundesarchiv.

The commander of the 18th SS Mountain Police Regiment between September through October 1st, 1944 was *Oberstleutnant* Hoesl. He was replaced on October 2nd, 1944 by Major Mann, when Hoesl was wounded. Major Mann in turn, led the regiment until his death by a mine on October 19th, 1944 in Belgrade.<sup>59</sup>

Although Juergen Stroop had left, many of the men that he had brought with him had remained when Schimana replaced him. One of those was *SS-Standartenfuehrer und Oberst der Polizei* Dr. Walther Blume, who was appointed as *Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei und Sicherheitsdienst* in Athens<sup>60</sup> (Supreme Commander of the Security Police and SS Security Service). Blume had arrived in Greece after having led *Sonderkommando 7A* in the Soviet Union.<sup>61</sup>



Blume's immediate subordinate in Athens was Criminal Inspector Hans Dorhage, who was the first head of the Athens SiPo/SD. In September, 1944 the worsening military situation in Greece forced the Military Commander "Southeast" to assume direct control. For months, the office of the Higher-SS & Police Leader "Greece," and that of Military Commander "Southeast" had quarrelled as to how to best fight the *Andartes*. On the 24th of that month, Walter Schimana was relieved of his post as a result of this difference of opinion.<sup>62</sup> One source states that the post of Higher-SS & Police Leader "Greece" was then briefly led by Criminal Inspector Hans Dorhage,<sup>63</sup> while another states that Hermann Franz was appointed to the post.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Hermann Franz. "Gebirgsjaeger der Polizei. Polizei-Gebirgsjaeger-Regiment 18 und Polizei-Gebirgs-Artillerieabteilung, 1942 bis 1945." Verlag Hans-Henning Podzun: Bad Nauheim, 1963. Page 235.

<sup>60</sup> U.S. National Archives, Case M-893, "The United States of America vs. Wilhelm List et al" (Case VII). Roll No. 9, December 9-11, 1947. Page 7146.

<sup>61</sup> John Mendelsohn, Series Editor. "The Holocaust: Selected Documents in Eighteen Volumes." Garland Publishing, Inc.: New York, 1982. Volume 10, page 155.

<sup>62</sup> Ruth Bettina Birn, op cit. Page 277.

<sup>63</sup> Mark Mazower, op cit. Page 221.

<sup>64</sup> Ruth Bettina Birn, op cit. Page 277

I believe that the latter is probably correct, for two reasons. First, the post of Higher-SS & Police Leader was a very high one, and one that would not be given to a lowly criminal inspector. Secondly, a day before Schimana was relieved of his post, that is, September 23rd, 1944, Hermann Franz had been promoted. He rose in rank from *SS-Standartenfuehrer und Oberst der Polizei*, to *SS-Brigadefuehrer und Generalmajor der Polizei*.<sup>65</sup> Perhaps with this important promotion came new duties.



ABOVE: Parade of the German Police, somewhere in a large Greek city, late 1943. The vehicle in the street appears to be a captured Italian L.6 (carrying a 37mm cannon). The Germans used captured Italian equipment (after Italy left the war) as often as possible, and in particular, supplied their Order Police and auxiliary forces with these and other foreign weapons. This Italian vehicle has been put to use by the German Order Police. A close examination of the rear vehicle license plate, under a magnifying glass revealed that indeed the German Police had put it to use. Bundesarchiv.

In either case, it is irrelevant since the title of Higher-SS & Police Leader "Greece" became redundant and without power now that the German Army had control over all matters, including fighting the guerrillas. In regards to forming anti-Communist forces to combat the ELAS guerrillas, it has to be said that SS General Walter Schimana's tour of service as commander of Higher-SS & Police Leader "Greece," was the most productive when you compare it to Juergen Strop's brief tour, and Hermann Franz's "caretaker" administration during the time of the German withdrawal from Greece.

<sup>65</sup> Dienstalsterliste der Schutzstaffel der NSDAP. (SS-Oberst-Gruppenfuehrer - SS-Standartenfuehrer) Stand vom 9. November 1944. Herausgegeben vom SS-Personalhauptamt. Gedruckt im der Reichsdruckerei: Berlin, 1944. Page 23.



Nine (9) volunteer battalions, three Evzone regiments (total of 9 battalions); one police cavalry squadron; one Italian and one Greek training & replacement company; three volunteer police battalions (mainly Italian volunteers); a police volunteer (half) battalion in Larissa; two volunteer battalions ("Euboea" I & II); Volunteer Battalion "Karditsa," which formed the backbone of the rightwing EASAD movement;<sup>66</sup> Volunteer Battalion "Salonika;" and four volunteer Gendarmerie battalions. In addition, we must also include four (4) Greek construction battalions and three Macedonian volunteer battalions organized by the Bulgarians. By August 15th, 1944 or just 6 weeks before he was relieved of his post, Schimana was hard at work, raising a 5th Gendarmerie battalion, and two additional volunteer battalions- one at Lamia and the other at Amfissa.

The following Order of Battle lists the available police forces at the disposal of the German Higher-SS & Police Leader "Greece" on August 15th, 1944:

#### EVZONE UNITS:

1st Evzone Regiment*	Athens	LXVIII Army Corps area
Ist, IInd, & IIIrd Battalions		
2nd Evzone Regiment*	Tripolis	LXVIII Army Corps area
Ist, IInd, & IIIrd Battalions		
3rd Evzone Regiment	Yannina	XXII Mountain Corps area
Ist, IInd, & IIIrd Battalion		

#### GENDARMERIE UNITS:

Ist Gendarmerie Battalion	Athens	LXVIII Army Corps area
IInd Gendarmerie Battalion	Corinth	LXVIII Army Corps area
IIIrd Gendarmerie Battalion	Kalamata	LXVIII Army Corps area
IVth Gendarmerie Battalion	Argos	LXVIII Army Corps area
Vth Gendarmerie Battalion	Athens	LXVIII Army Corps area
(forming)		

#### VOLUNTEER BATTALIONS:

Ist Volunteer Battalion	Katerini	LXXXXXI Army Corps area
IInd Volunteer Battalion	Verria	LXXXXXI Army Corps area
IIIrd Volunteer Battalion	Kozani	LXXXXXI Army Corps area
IVth Volunteer Battalion	Yiannitsa	LXXXXXI Army Corps area
Vth Volunteer Battalion	Kozani	LXXXXXI Army Corps area
VIth Volunteer Battalion	Kozani	LXXXXXI Army Corps area
VIIth Volunteer Battalion	Kilkis	LXXXXXI Army Corps area
VIIIth Volunteer Battalion	Lachanas	LXXXXXI Army Corps area
IXth Volunteer Battalion	Krya-Vrisi	LXXXXXI Army Corps area

\* A document, dated "19.04.1944" listed the 1st & 2nd Evzone Regiments, and the Ist-IIIrd Police Volunteer Battalions (see next page) as being under the control of the German Order Police & SS for anti-partisan warfare.<sup>67</sup> The Greek units were directly under the control of the German Order Police during anti-partisan sweeps, and indirectly during all other times.

<sup>66</sup> For a history of this battalion, and of the EASAD movement, please turn to page 35 of this book.

<sup>67</sup> NARS Microfilm T-175, Roll 174, Frame 2709401 & 2709405.

Ist (Macedonian) Volunteer Battalion [IMRO]	Kastoria	LXXXXXI Army Corps area
IIInd (Macedonian) Volunteer Battalion [IMRO]	Florina	LXXXXXI Army Corps area
IIIrd (Macedonian) Volunteer Battalion [IMRO]	Edessa	LXXXXXI Army Corps area
Poulos-Verband	Verria	LXXXXXI Army Corps area
Police Volunteer Battalion "Karditsa"	Karditsa	XXII Mountain Corps area
Volunteer (Half) Battalion "Larissa"	Larissa	LXXXXXI Army Corps area
Volunteer Battalion "Lamia" (forming)	Lamia	LXVIII Army Corps area
Volunteer Battalion "Amfissa" (forming)	Amfissa	LXVIII Army Corps area
Police Volunteer Battalion "Salonika"	Salonika	LXXXXXI Army Corps area
Ist Police Volunteer Battalion*	Athens	LXVIII Army Corps area
IIInd Police Volunteer Battalion*	Volos	LXXXXXI Army Corps area
IIIrd Police Volunteer Battalion*	Verria	LXXXXXI Army Corps area
Police Volunteer Battalion "Euboea I"	Chalsis	LXVIII Army Corps area
Police Volunteer Battalion "Euboea II"	Chalsis	LXVIII Army Corps area
Volunteer Battalion "Leonidas"	Sparta	LXVIII Army Corps area

#### CONSTRUCTION UNITS: (All in the process of forming)

Construction Battalion "Salonika"	Salonika	LXXXXXI Army Corps area
Construction Battalion "Larissa"	Larissa	LXXXXXI Army Corps area
Construction Battalion "Yannina"	Yannina	XXII Mountain Corps area
Construction Battalion "Athens"	Athens	LXVIII Army Corps area
Construction Battalion "Peloponnes" <sup>68</sup>	Peloponnes	LXVIII Army Corps area

Before the end of 1944, the following additional volunteer battalions were added:

Volunteer Battalion "Agrinio"	Agrinio	XXII Mountain Corps area
Volunteer Battalion "Megalopolis"	Megalopolis	LXVIII Army Corps area

In addition to these units, the Higher-SS & Police Leader "Greece" also formed an SS Police Cavalry Squadron. As of April, 1944 the total Athens garrison security forces amounted to the

<sup>68</sup> NARS Microfilm T-78, Roll 410, Frames 6378310-72; Befehlsgliederung OB Suedost (Heeresgruppe F), Stand: 15.8.44.

## 61

Map of Greece showing military units and locations. Key locations include Thessaly, Macedonia, Epirus, Boeotia, and Peloponnese. Military units are marked with symbols and labels, including 'I + II VOLUNTEER BATTALIONS', 'GENDARMERIE BATTALION', 'EASAD VOLUNTEER BATTALION', 'GERMAN ARMY GROUP', 'GERMAN CORPS', 'GERMAN DIVISION', and 'GERMAN 92nd Motorized Regiment'. A key indicates symbols for 'I + II VOLUNTEER BATTALIONS', 'GENDARMERIE BATTALION', 'EASAD VOLUNTEER BATTALION', and 'GERMAN ARMY GROUP'. A note states: 'THESE WERE IN ACTUALITY VOLUNTEER BATTALIONS "KASTORIA", "FLORINA", & "EDESSA."'. Another note states: 'THIS VILLAGE ALSO SERVED AS A BASE FOR THE "POULOS" UNIT.'



following organizations and troop strengths (not including German Air Force, regular Army, and Naval units in Athens):

- 1) Higher-SS & Police Leader "Greece" - *SS-Gruppenfuehrer und Generalleutnant der Polizei und Waffen-SS* Walter Schimana.

Officers	Cvilian officials	NCO's	Men	Total
7	0	15	8	30

- 2) Supreme Commander of the Order Police "Greece" - *SS-Standartenfuehrer und Oberst der Polizei* Hermann Franz.

Officers	civilian officials	NCO's	Men	Total
19	3	32	18*	72

\* (Two Germans and 16 Italians)

- 3) Commander of the Order Police "Athens" - *Oberstleutnant der Schutzpolizei* Nagel.

Officers	Civilian Officials	NCO's	Men	Total
2	1	3	0	6

Gendarmerie Platoon (Motorized) No.40 [Under "Commander of Order Police Greece"]-

Officers	NCO's	Men	Total
1	5	34	40

- 4) Supreme Commander of the Security Police & SS Security Service "Greece" - *SS-Standartenfuehrer und Oberst der Polizei* Dr. Walter Blume.

Officers	NCO's	Men	Total
33	140	152	325

- 5) Prison Camp 135 - *Oberstleutnant* Dr. Knoll

Headquarters Staff Platoon

Officers	Civilian Offcls.	NCO's	German Enls.	Greek Enlisted	Total
7	2	19	35	23	86

Guard Company

Officers	Civilian Offcls.	NCO's	German Enls.	Greek Enlisted	Total
1	0	19	129	56	205

- 6) Security Battalion 596 (at Iliopolis) - *Major* Roensch

Officers	Civilian Officials	NCO's	Men	Total
11	1	88	518	618

- 7) Regional Defense Battalion No.266 - 637 officers, NCO's, and men split up as follows:

Headquarters Platoon - 22 Officers, NCO's, & men  
 1st Company - *Hauptmann* Berkholz plus 152 officers, NCO's, & men  
 2nd Company - *Hauptmann* Luedtke plus 156 officers, NCO's, & men  
 3rd Company - *Oberleutnant* Wapler plus 152 officers, NCO's, & men  
 4th Company - *Hauptmann* Hennemann plus 151 officers, NCO's, & men

8) 1st Company/ Field Police Battalion [motorized] No.501 - *Hauptmann* Panek

Officers	NCO's	German enstl.	Greek enstl.	Total
2	83	21	1	107

9) Secret Field Police Troop 510 - *Geheim Feldpolizei Kommissar* Behan

Civilian Officials	NCO's	Men	Total
10	104	81	195

10) Haidari Prison Camp - *Oberleutnant der Schutzpolizei* Fischer

Haidari Guard Company  
*Leutnant der Schutzpolizei* Stubenbeck\*

Officers	NCO's	Men	Total
1*	23	126	150

11) Prison 307 - *Inspektor* Peters\*

Prison Guard Platoon

Civilian Officials	NCO's	German enstl.	Greek enstl.	Total
1*	5	26	11	43

12) Ist Police Volunteer Battalion - *Major* Mahner

	Officers	Civilian Officials	NCO's	Men	Total
Germans	8	3	69	9	89
Italians	10	0	77	498	585

Grand Total: 674

13) Ist Battalion/ SS-Police Mountain Regiment 18 - *Oberstleutnant* Hoesl

1st Company - *Hauptmann* Bothmer  
 2nd Company - *Leutnant* Quittkat  
 3rd Company - *Oberleutnant* Novacki  
 4th Company - *Hauptmann* Reischl

The battalion had the following complement of officers, NCO's, and men:  
 Ist Battalion/ SS-Police Mountain Regiment 18

Ist Battalion	Officers	NCO's	Men	Total
1st Company	2	28	184	214
2nd Company	1	20	190	211
3rd Company	2	23	172	197
4th Company	3	25	161	189

14) 1st Evzone Regiment - unknown

Officers	NCO's	Men	Total
130	327	1,447	1,904

1st Evzone Regiment / German liaison officer - *Hauptmann* Baier

15) Ist Gendarmerie Battalion - unknown

Officers	NCO's	Men	Total
41	98	229	368

# TOWARD A RECKONING: THE NUMBERS-

The numbers of Greek troops employed turned out to be quite high, although it never reached the estimated 50,000 that Mr. Ready suggests.<sup>69</sup> If we add up all of the numbers of troops employed, and add in the estimated 5,000+ men of the village militias, and the 5,000 militiamen of the Tsaos Andon formation, we come up with a number in the neighborhood of around 34,000 men. Not exactly a large number, but still a significantly large collaborationist force, given Greece's small population. This figure does not even include the three police volunteer battalions made up of Germans and Italians. If we add those 3 battalions, the numbers rise to around 36,000 men.

The total exact number of Evzone troops employed on the Axis side was as follows:<sup>70</sup>

Officers	NCO's	Men	Total
532	656	4,537	5,725

The same report which listed exact figures for Evzone troops employed during the occupation, also listed the number of volunteer formations employed throughout Greece (16,625 officers, NCO's, and men) as follows:

In Macedonia - 3 Bulgarian-raised battalions, & 10 volunteer battalions

In central Greece - 2 volunteer battalions

In southeast Greece - 2 volunteer battalions

In the Peloponnes - 5 volunteer battalions<sup>71</sup>

<sup>69</sup> J.Lee Ready, op cit. Page 123.

<sup>70</sup> Bundesarchiv Koblenz, NS-19, Aktenbandes Nr.3695, Folio 1/19 (Datum: 2.11.44), Drei seiten. Page 2.

<sup>71</sup> These figures exclude the village militias, Gendarmerie, Evzone battalions, and the 5,000 men of the Tsaos Andon militia.



How effective were these German supported and raised Greek volunteer battalions? A final report for *Reichsfuehrer-SS* Heinrich Himmler stated that between September, 1943 and September 1944, that is, the time of heaviest action and involvement for the Greek collaborationist forces, the number of enemy killed, captured, or apprehended included the following tally:

Enemy Losses	Killed	Taken Prisoner	Apprehended	Total
Men	3,308	1,750	3,258	8,316
Captured Booty	German made	Italian made	Greek made	Total
Rifles	452	65	817	1,334
Pistols	126	18	198	342
Light MG's	26	5	48	79
Heavy MG's	5	1	19	25
Mortars	5	2	15	22
Machine Pistols	24	3	48	75
Bazookas	1	0	0	1

During this same time, the German, Italian, and Greek Axis formations lost the following numbers of men in combat:

	Killed	Wounded	Missing	Total
German Officers	7	9	2	18
German Enlisted	62	130	168	360
Italian Officers	0	4	3	7
Italian Enlisted	23	20	128	171
Greek Officers	89	87	24	200
Greek Enlisted	608	822	562	1,992
			Grand Total:	2,748

What this last table shows is two primary things. First, it was the Greek collaborationists themselves who did most of the fighting (and dying). Secondly, the loss ratio of Axis security troops vs. killed or captured *Andartes* is quite high. That is, for every two guerrillas killed or captured, the Greek and German forces had to expect to lose one soldier.<sup>72</sup>

The ELAS guerrilla movement, which had about 16,000 men in July, 1943 and had increased their numbers to 35,000 men by October of that same year, reached a strength of 50,000 men on the eve of the liberation. In order to have eliminated the entire ELAS movement, the Greek Axis troops, together with the German police forces, would have had to take losses in estimate of 25,000 men, or almost the entire Greek collaborationist force.

<sup>72</sup>

This estimate does not count "apprehended" suspects, since they were not taken in battle.

ELAS claims to have inflicted serious losses on the Axis occupation forces. Although their figures do not include Greek collaborationist troops, if we add those Greek Axis losses from the previous table, we come up with an interesting final picture of total Axis losses in Greece. This is of course, if the ELAS figures are to be believed:

Axis Forces	Killed	Wounded	Captured	Total
German	16,062	6,504	1,878	24,444
Bulgarian	1,305	1,037	2,230	4,572
Italian	1,988	735	1,073 <sup>1</sup>	3,796
Greek	697	909	586 <sup>2</sup>	2,192
Grand Total:	20,052	9,185	5,767	35,004

<sup>1</sup> This figure does not even include the Pinerolo Division & Aosta Cavalry Regiment which went over to the ELAS guerrillas *en-masse*. Instead of keeping them as independent guerrilla units, the ELAS command disbanded both units and spread its men throughout their guerrilla organization.

<sup>2</sup> This figure is for "Missing," which includes those men that were killed and not accounted for, deserters, and those captured by the *Andartes*.

ELAS claims that during the entire campaign, they suffered approximately 4,500 dead, and 6,000 wounded, for a grand total of only around 10,500 losses.<sup>73</sup> This is quite an impressively low number, but total guerrilla losses (both ELAS and non-ELAS) amounted to around 16,000.<sup>74</sup> This means that ELAS did most of the fighting (and dying). An additional estimated 34,000 people were executed or died in custody<sup>75</sup> and this figure most assuredly includes civilians. The figure of 16,000 dead *Andartes* probably also includes those losses that occurred while the various guerrilla factions were fighting each other.

A recent scholarly study has tried to paint the ELAS guerrilla movement as a popular uprising that not only included Communists, but non-Communist volunteers. In fact, it even goes on to say that **most** of ELAS was composed of non-Communist elements, and the label that ELAS was Communist is incorrect. While this reasoning is a good one, it fails to mention the following facts: Even if this hypothesis were true, it nevertheless did not prevent ELAS from attacking all of the other Greek guerrilla movements, destroying completely many of them; And it did not prevent the "small number" of Communists within the movement from using ELAS after the war and fighting the Greek Civil War as the military arm of EAM.

One final word must be said about the Greek volunteers of the security battalions. When it seemed that the British and the newly established Greek government were losing control of the situation, vis-a-vis the fighting with ELAS, the British themselves decided to open the prison camps and arm the ex-Battalionists to help them fight the Communists. This they did willingly, and goes a long way to prove that many had fought in the ranks of the Rallis government not so much to help the Axis, but to fight for a post-war, Communist-free Greece.

<sup>73</sup> Major-General Stefanos Sarafis, op cit. Page 428.

<sup>74</sup> J.Lee Ready, op cit. Page 123.

<sup>75</sup> J.Lee Ready, ibid. Page 123.

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RIGHT & BELOW: Greek Evzone troops in action, 1943-1944. The Greek government of Ioannis Rallis, with the aid of the Germans, organized tens of thousands of Greek volunteers for service in the Axis security forces. This is their story. Photo credit: Museum of Modern History, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

